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THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE
THE VICTORIES OF LOVE

THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

TOGETHER WITH

THE VICTORIES OF LOVE

BY

COVENTRY PATMORE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ALICE MEYNELL



LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LIMITED

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

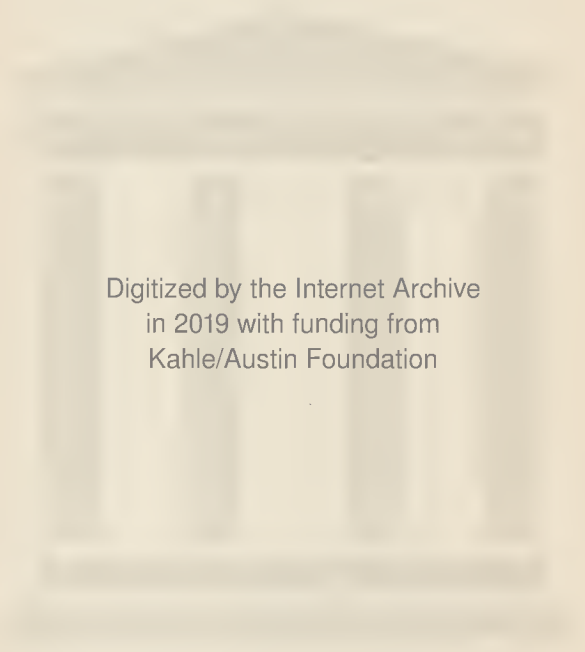
PR 5142 .A4 1905

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THIS POEM
IS INSCRIBED
TO
THE MEMORY OF HER
BY WHOM
AND FOR WHOM
I BECAME A POET

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION. BY MRS. MEYNELL .	I

THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

BOOK I

THE PROLOGUE	27
----------------------	----

CANTO

I. THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE—

Preludes :

1. The Impossibility	31
2. Love's Reality	31
3. The Poet's Confidence	32
The Cathedral Close	33

II. MARY AND MILDRED—

Preludes :

1. The Paragon	37
2. Love at Large	39
3. Love and Duty	40
4. A Distinction	40
Mary and Mildred	41

CANTO

III. HONORIA—

Preludes :

	PAGE
1. The Lover	44
2. Love a Virtue	45
3. Unthrift	46
4. The Attainment	46
Honoriam	47

IV. THE MORNING CALL—

Preludes :

1. The Rose of the World	51
2. The Tribute	53
3. Compensation	53
The Morning Call	54

V. THE VIOLETS—

Preludes :

1. The Comparison	57
2. Love in Tears	58
3. Prospective Faith	59
4. Venus Victrix	59
The Violets	60

VI. THE DEAN—

Preludes :

1. Perfect Love Rare	63
2. Love Justified	64
3. Love Serviceable	65
4. A Riddle Solved	65
The Dean	66

CONTENTS

xi

CANTO

VII. ÆTNA AND THE MOON—

Preludes :	PAGE
1. Love's Immortality . . .	69
2. Heaven and Earth . . .	70
Ætna and the Moon . . .	71

VIII. SARUM PLAIN—

Preludes :	
1. Life of Life . . .	75
2. The Revelation . . .	76
3. The Spirit's Epochs . . .	76
4. The Prototype . . .	77
5. The Praise of Love . . .	77
Sarum Plain . . .	78

IX. SAHARA—

Preludes :	
1. The Wife's Tragedy . . .	82
2. Common Graces . . .	83
3. The Zest of Life . . .	84
4. Fool and Wise . . .	84
Sahara . . .	85

X. GOING TO CHURCH—

Preludes :	
1. The Joyful Wisdom . . .	89
2. The Devices . . .	91
Going to Church . . .	92

XI. THE DANCE—

Preludes :	
1. The Daughter of Eve . . .	96
2. Aurea Dicta . . .	97
The Dance . . .	100

CANTO

XII. THE ABDICATION—

Preludes :	PAGE
1. The Chace	104
2. Denied	107
3. The Churl	108
The Abdication	109

BOOK II

THE PROLOGUE 112

I. ACCEPTED—

Preludes :	
1. The Song of Songs	115
2. The Kites	116
3. Orpheus	116
4. Nearest the Dearest	117
5. Perspective	117
Accepted	118

II. THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE—

Preludes :	
1. The Changed Allegiance	121
2. Beauty	124
3. Lais and Lucretia	125
The Course of True Love	126

III. THE COUNTY BALL—

Preludes :	
1. Love Ceremonious	130
2. The Rainbow	131
3. A Paradox	131
The County Ball	132

CONTENTS

xiii

CANTO

IV. LOVE IN IDLENESS—

Preludes :	PAGE
1. Honour and Desert . . .	136
2. Love and Honour . . .	137
3. Valour Misdirected . . .	137
Love in Idleness . . .	138

V. THE QUEEN'S ROOM—

Preludes :	
1. Rejected . . .	142
2. Rachel . . .	143
3. The Heart's Prophecies . . .	143
The Queen's Room . . .	144

VI. THE LOVE-LETTERS—

Preludes :	
1. Love's Perversity . . .	148
2. The Power of Love . . .	150
The Love-Letters . . .	151

VII. THE REVULSION—

Preludes :	
1. Joy and Use . . .	154
2. 'She was Mine' . . .	155
The Revulsion . . .	156

VIII. THE KOH-I-NOOR—

Preludes :	
1. In Love . . .	160
2. Love Thinking . . .	162
3. The Kiss . . .	163
The Koh-i-noor . . .	164

CANTO

IX. THE FRIENDS—

Preludes :

	PAGE
1. The Nursling of Civility . . .	167
2. The Foreign Land . . .	168
3. Disappointment . . .	168
The Friends . . .	169

X. THE EPITAPH—

Preludes :

1. Frost in Harvest . . .	172
2. Felicity . . .	173
3. Marriage Indissoluble . . .	173
The Epitaph . . .	174

XI. THE WEDDING—

Preludes :

1. Platonic Love . . .	177
2. A Demonstration . . .	178
3. The Symbol . . .	178
4. Constancy Rewarded . . .	179
The Wedding . . .	180

XII. HUSBAND AND WIFE—

Preludes :

1. The Married Lover . . .	183
2. The Amaranth . . .	184
Husband and Wife . . .	185

THE EPILOGUE . . .	188
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THE VICTORIES OF LOVE

BOOK I

	PAGE
I. FROM FREDERICK GRAHAM . . .	195
II. FROM MRS. GRAHAM . . .	201
III. FROM FREDERICK . . .	203
IV. FROM FREDERICK . . .	205
V. FROM FREDERICK . . .	208
VI. FROM MRS. GRAHAM . . .	212
VII. FROM FREDERICK . . .	215
VIII. FROM FREDERICK . . .	218
IX. FROM FREDERICK . . .	220
X. FROM FREDERICK . . .	226
XI. FROM MRS. GRAHAM . . .	231
XII. FROM FREDERICK . . .	236
XIII. FROM LADY CLITHEROE TO MARY CHURCHILL . . .	244
XIV. FROM JANE TO HER MOTHER . .	247
XV. FROM FREDERICK . . .	250
XVI. FROM JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM . .	251
XVII. FROM FELIX TO HONORIA . . .	255
XVIII. FROM FREDERICK . . .	258
XIX. FROM JANE . . .	263

BOOK II

	PAGE
I. FROM JANE TO HER MOTHER . . .	265
II. FROM LADY CLITHEROE TO MARY CHURCHILL . . .	268
III. FROM JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM . . .	272
IV. FROM FREDERICK TO MRS. GRAHAM	276
V. FROM MRS. GRAHAM . . .	280
VI. FROM JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM . . .	283
VII. FROM JANE TO FREDERICK . . .	286
VIII. FROM JANE TO FREDERICK . . .	291
IX. FROM LADY CLITHEROE TO MRS. GRAHAM . . .	297
X. FROM FREDERICK TO HONORIA . . .	301
XI. FROM MARY CHURCHILL TO THE DEAN . . .	303
XII. FROM FREDERICK TO HONORIA . . .	307
XIII. FROM LADY CLITHEROE TO EMILY GRAHAM . . .	315
THE WEDDING SERMON . . .	320

COVENTRY PATMORE

COVENTRY PATMORE has been—notwithstanding the all-admiring study of a few contemporaries of his later life, and notwithstanding the unstudious admiration of his earlier audience—a greatly neglected poet. It may be even said that the praise given to him by his illustrious friends misses the centre of the mark. He had the praise of the praised, but did they not praise a little amiss? As one reads the letters of Emerson, Hawthorne, Carlyle, and Newman, and Ruskin's eulogies in *Time and Tide*, *Elements of Drawing*, and the letter that defended Patmore against the attack of *The Critic* in 1855, and even his most beautiful homage in *Sesame and Lilies*, one judges that there must have been a centre of humility in the midst of Coventry Patmore's haughty soul. For while his pride was consciously content with the derision of the foolish, he was able to accept the insufficient and defective homage of some of the wise—a harder thing to

suffer cheerfully. Ruskin's praises, for example, of poetry full of intellect, illumination, bright anger, and fire, as 'a finished piece of writing', and a 'sweet analysis of quiet domestic feeling', must have caused the pain that has to be endured in secret. Ruskin's words, whether we hold them to be adequate or not, were necessarily defective to the mind of him who had intended to write, in the greatest sense of the word, a heavenly poem. But that intention had to stand, lofty as it was, for many and many a year behind the generous championship of Ruskin's recommendation—a bitter boon, offered in all good will to a man reviled, and received with counsel-keeping good humour. Again, a letter of Newman's exists in which the Cardinal speaks of the odes of the 'Unknown Eros'—each of which is whole, and moreover complete from the beginning, like a picture by Velasquez—as beautiful 'fragments', and goes on to the hackneyed comparison of the Æolian harp. Carlyle, again. With what heart must any poet put among his testimonials an 'appreciation' by Carlyle? 'A great deal of fine poetic light, and many excellent elements of valuable human faculty', is the phrase that Carlyle found, evidently not with ease; and he followed it with 'most cheery, sunshiny, pleasant', and 'pure, fresh, quaintly comfortable'; with

warnings, too, that Patmore was too apt to hit upon

an antique *Cowleian* vein, what Johnson would call the 'metaphysical'; . . . but this too, if well done, as it here is, I like to see—as a gymnastic exercise of wit, were it nothing more.

Now it is quite possible that a reader may hold the love story of *The Angel in the House* to be 'quaint', its passion to be 'comfortable', and its mysticism a 'gymnastic exercise' which the spectator may like to sit to see. With such a judgment I am not at this moment in dispute; my present contention has regard to the minor and the major sufferings forced upon the solitary heart. And who shall say that, though Coventry Patmore laughed cordially on finding himself named as the fellow-poet of Tupper, in his chance reading of a novel by Mr. Justin McCarthy, he did not undergo, from the 'quaint' of Carlyle and the 'sweet' of Ruskin, and the 'Æolian harp' of Newman, a harder experience—the experience of active isolation, a kind of sentence of exile, enduring which the poet says, unlike Bolingbroke—

'The sun that warms you here shines not on me'?

Complete and absolute solitude it was not, however. Tennyson said of *The Angel*, 'You have begun an immortal poem', and 'It will add to the very small number of great poems which

the world has had.' And in a younger generation the odes have received tribute from no obscure pens. We have also to remember that the private opinion was often better than the published. Ruskin, for example, may have rightly thought that 'finish' and 'sweetness' were the words to assuage a review and attract an audience; but in an unpublished letter to the poet, what he praised was 'fine close English and noble thought'; and of the storm in 'Faithful for Ever' he wrote, 'Professing myself rather a judge of thunderstorms, I am prepared to assert this the best thunderstorm ever done.'

The father of Coventry Patmore was an author, of no great distinction, though he might well have been a writer of good prose in a more exacting time. He lived between two ages; and for a decade of years after his day, and nearly two score years after it, the English language was lax and unbraced—fatigued, unstrung by the exercises of the writers who had followed and mimicked with one accord the long word and short sentence of Gibbon. As it is, he was an author of no mean fancy; some uninspired suggestions of his son's magnificent ode *St. Valentine's Day* may be found in his little book of essays on *The Months*; and it is to be regretted that his less worthy work, *My Friends and*

Acquaintances, should have been in its day the most read. So ill was it received by the critics, however, that the writer's young son had even some thoughts of changing his own name for the purposes of authorship. He had also a graver disadvantage to undergo from his parentage. But meanwhile Leigh Hunt was one of his father's friends; for if the reviewers of that cruel age were his enemies, the men of letters were his friends. Leigh Hunt, whose good word was able at that day to put heart into a lad, gave it cordially to the boy of sixteen. He writes on a proof page of one of the early poems:—

‘Your son, my dear Patmore, is a *poet*. He does not need to be told this, but he must be pleased to hear it said by any lover of poetry, properly so called. He has imagination, expression, thought, and the feeling which is finer than thought, and includes thought. So heaven speed him, prays Leigh Hunt.’

Blackwood's Magazine committed itself, in a review of Coventry Patmore's early poems, to one of the customary outrages of the ‘criticism’ of those days. It associated the new poet with his father's friends (giving a strange ambiguity to the intended insult by the association of their names), although their immortal poetry was in no degree the source or cause of his.

‘This is the life [said this “critic”, who will therefore be remembered with the abler but not less erring men who reviewed Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and

Tennyson] which the slime of the Keateses (*sic*) and Shelleys of former times has fecundated. The result was predicted a quarter of a century ago in this magazine—nothing is so tenacious of life as the spawn of frogs.’

The poetic posterity of Shelley and Keats may care to remember the word. Then the critic hoped the young man would write no more, and thus save to reviewers the task of condemnation, to himself some pain, ‘and to his friends, mayhap, the cost of maintaining a lank-ribbed author and a bare-footed family.’

Earlier than all this, however, and before Coventry Patmore’s birth, a graver misfortune had been prepared for his inheritance. His father had taken an accessory part in an unhappy duel, that caused the death of one of the principals, Mr. John Scott. Not only the mere fact of the duel, but also the conduct of the meeting, came before the courts, with the issue of a verbal acquittal on the graver charges ; but public indignation was hot against Patmore, who—right or wrong—endured the calamity with a dignity that is one of the points on which his character resembled his son’s. His grief, nevertheless, was poignant. The unhappy widow of the slain man wrote him long letters of condolence and consolation. After this blow fell another—the loss of the means of life. Coventry

Patmore, after a childhood and youth of no little luxury, had to face the world early and alone as a poor man. He had been delicately indulged and sheltered by a father who fondly admired him, and trained him, not religiously, but, under whatever sanctions, in a strict morality. His education had been private. He had spent some years at a school near Paris with all kinds of exceptional privileges. The liberty of thought—the long leisure of meditation—that was all his life necessary to him, he seems to have possessed then as at all subsequent ages and places. His father, probably, knew the value of this unbound and spacious existence; but it is certain that the young poet was not a scholar. An existing letter written by Peter Patmore to his son Coventry at the Paris school is an example of a wisdom, a vigilance, an anxiety, and a sympathy that must have done much to charge the word ‘fatherly’ with great meanings in the son’s mind—the son who was, in his own time of fatherhood, to turn to a Creator—

‘Fatherly not less
Than I.’

Words are fresh creatures when Coventry Patmore uses them in poetry, but they have also there the ancient freshness of a paternal tradition

Not a scholar, little versed in the classics,

Coventry Patmore had a youthful passion for both mathematics and the natural sciences ; but he was above all a man of letters, and when his father's ruinous fortunes left him to find a livelihood, he began inevitably, but with the reluctance of a poet, 'to write for the reviews.' His distaste for this word is significant of the condition of the reviews in the middle of the nineteenth century. The journeyman's labour pretended to no more than common sense and decorum ; it made no claim to the name of art or even of skill. And as for the successes of the profession—I have already quoted the phrase of the reviewer who warned the young poet that he should write no more, and so save 'his friends, mayhap, the cost of maintaining a lank-ribbed author and a bare-footed family', and who called the poetic posterity of Shelley and Keats 'the spawn of frogs.' It was actually suggested that John Wilson had written this article. It was assuredly not the work of Wilson ; but it is startling that anyone should, however rashly, attribute these squalid phrases to any writer of repute. Men of honour, on the other hand, were at work—famously at work—on the reviews, but there was a character of insult in their critical pages, and the insult was aimed not at mediocrity, but at genius. Coventry Patmore, shrinking in his youthfulness, in his delicate

individuality, in the quick of his art, and in his sensitiveness as a mere gentleman, from such literary company, was fortunately saved from the derogation. Mr. Procter (Barry Cornwall) and his wife befriended him, and to his last year he remembered it. Long afterwards, he did something to express his gratitude when Procter died, and Mrs. Procter made the somewhat over-urgent request that Coventry Patmore should write his life. It was done, but it remains the one really weak piece of work that Patmore has left—languid, fitful, confessing the spur, and altogether a failure. At the house of the Procters he made his re-entry into the London social world. With his father he had appeared, a mere boy, at Lady Blessington's—a wilder world; alone he now entered a less showy society. He was more than six feet high, with strange features, waving hair, and a white and silken skin. 'And who is your lean young friend, with the frayed coat-cuffs?' said Lord Houghton to the hostess. Mrs. Procter, famous for many a sharp saying, had in this case a gentle one. 'Oh, you would not talk in that way if you knew how clever he is, and how unfortunate.' She lent the poems at the same time, and gained for the stranger a most beneficent friend. Lord Houghton lost not a day in seeking for him a place in the British Museum

—‘the position of all in the world best suited to me’, said Coventry Patmore in after years. At the Museum he read—‘I think I read all the books in the world’, he used to say—literally the greater number of books written in English and French it might well be, for he gave years to the matter, and did all things quickly. He held his assistant-librarianship until the fortune of his second wife allowed him to retire into the leisure of country life. But meanwhile he married on his slender revenue, helped by some little newspaper work in the evenings, his wife being the daughter of a dissenting minister, the Dr. Andrews who taught John Ruskin Greek. He was twenty-three, his bride a year younger, and their marriage was in 1846. The friends of this happy time were Rossetti, Emerson, Tennyson, Ruskin, Browning, Dobell, Worsley, and Aubrey de Vere. Thenceforth, in the little suburban cottage, love became the centre of the whole system of his spiritual philosophy, and the subject of a meditation that closed only with the last breath of his passionate life.

Love was to him theology, and the key to the parable of life. Religion had taken possession of him suddenly one day in boyhood—possession of the ‘mighty kingdoms three’ of his human nature: senses, emotion, and intellect. So he believed, and that belief never lapsed in the

sixty years following. The magnificent love-poetry of *The Unknown Eros* in his later years was the loud but dimly intelligible utterance of an awful experience. Loud, I say, for the utterance is thunder and song. The secret experiences of others have been spoken in whispers. That of Coventry Patmore is to be described in two of Tennyson's finest lines :

‘An answer pealed from that high land,
But in a tongue no man could understand.’

During the first years of his marriage with Emily Andrews, Coventry Patmore wrote *The Angel in the House*, and was so poor that on the fly-leaf of the MS. of a book which he himself held to be priceless, he offered a reward of ten shillings to any finder in case of its loss. After the birth of several children his wife died of consumption. To her death we owe those poems of penetrating grief, ‘The Azalea’, ‘Departure’, ‘Farewell’, ‘If I were Dead’, ‘Eurydice’, and ‘The Day After To-morrow’, written in the second period of the poet's inspiration. Soon after this loss Coventry Patmore spent some time in Rome with his friend Aubrey de Vere, and there was received into the Roman Catholic Church. While yet in the poignancy of his grief he met a Catholic lady, Miss Mary Byles, who pitied his despair. To his own candid surprise

he learnt to love her; he reveals the puzzle of his own heart in the wonderful ode, 'Tired Memory.' After her sudden death nearly twenty years later, he made a third alliance, with Miss Harriet Robson. In politics Coventry Patmore called himself a Tory, but his Toryism was exclusively his own. He professed some vague retrospective allegiance to some great day of 'England's prime', but was as hard put to it to give that prime a date as are other appellants to the past. He protested his despair of England after the Conservative Reform Bill of 1867; she was to be to the future man 'a great heroic nation long since dead', remembered for 'the bird-voice and the blast of her omniloquent tongue', when that language also should itself be dead. Was ever national speech so majestically praised? Coventry Patmore died in 1896, aged seventy-three.

The first half of the nineteenth century was not richer in illustrious poetry than the second; but the fifty years of Coleridge, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats would, in fact, greatly overpass in greatness the fifty years during which Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Rossetti, and Coventry Patmore chiefly wrote, and in which they died, if one of these names were lacking. Nor is the last the least essential.

With the slender volume of the odes headed by *The Unknown Eros*, Coventry Patmore takes an integral and indispensable part in the history of the national poetry. He is an unique poet, as every poet of true greatness is, single and solitary; nevertheless his solitude is the contemporary of the solitude of his fellows and equals. It is part of the same system. As an incommunicable planet, isolated, exchanges influences with the rest, so the greater poets of an age and nation are alone, but not out of the bounds of a spacious and an eternal society.

In these two periods—the former and the latter, the day of *The Angel in the House* and the day of *The Unknown Eros*—Coventry Patmore has been successively one of the most popular and one of the least popular of poets. This fact is explained by his own great obvious, or rather apparent, variety. He seems to be the most diverse of writers: essentially he had but one subject—human love as a mystery; and but one character—an impassioned spirituality. He had also but one method—Realism, as modern language prefers to have the word. Reality would suit Coventry Patmore better. He was, in his early work, a manifest realist of the kind which attracts and attaches the majority; he wrote, that is, of contemporary life with ‘finish.’ In the later poetry he is the poet of

reality no less—the poet of experience and experiment. There never was a writer more immediately true, of a closer sincerity. His, moreover, is a great sincerity, not only because it is perfect, but because it is the sincerity of a great man. The sincerity of smaller poets may be complete, yet not (artistically) of importance. Coventry Patmore's is an august sincerity majestically and intimately expressed. His spiritual experience or experiment is of eternal moment to himself and of immortal moment to his right reader. It dictated *The Angel in the House* when the poet was a young man, no less than 'Departure' and 'Eurydice' in his later age. It would have surprised all but a few readers of the former poem, when it was popular, to hear their little story—the 'funny little story' Ruskin calls the sequel of *The Angel*—likened in any way to the mystic Odes. To many thousand readers *The Angel* was no more than a modern love-story, much more gay, tender, delicate, and witty than love-story poems are apt to be—warm with humanity, here and there a little mysterious, but generally intelligible; its fancies securely made fast to the facts, and those facts most quaintly demure and prosperous: the wooing of a Dean's daughter by a fortunate youth. The propriety and fastidiousness of polite life had never before

been matter for high poetry. It amused many to find the Cathedral Close as gaily sung as the Village had been or the Court. Others, again, very probably thought it a trivial scene, and the persons of the little story trivial. To Patmore man and woman were creatures of dignity, of honour, and of bliss, even in mid-Victorian dress and in the conditions of provincial elegance. To none but the triflers could the peculiar severity and the peculiar gaiety of the poem, set in such a scene, have made their appeal in vain. But perhaps there were a few even of these ; and they can have seen nothing in the Cathedral Close poem of the human dignity which, for their own part, they lacked.

Nevertheless, nothing is trivial in *The Angel in the House*, although the metre has been accused of triviality. A light octosyllabic measure, full of rhymes, suits the story, with its epigram and wit, only too well ; it does much to divert an ordinarily careless reader from the mystery. Yet admirably and closely does it contain a thought such as this :

‘I vowed unvarying faith, and she
To whom in full I pay that vow
Rewards me with variety
Which men who change can never know.’

Easily and all-gracefully does joyful fancy play in its delicate bonds, as here :

‘The more I praised the more she shone,
Her eyes incredulously bright,
And all her happy beauty blown
Beneath the beams of my delight.
Sweet rivalry was thus begot ;
By turns my speech, in passion’s style,
With flatteries the truth o’ershot,
And she surpassed them with her smile.’

How finely, moreover, the short line can describe is proved in this passage :

‘Her loveliness that rather lay
In light than colour ;’

And these wonderful little lines :

‘Nature to you was more than kind.
’Twas fond perversity to dress
So much simplicity of mind
In such a pomp of loveliness.’

And how the line that seems trivial to trivial ears can be charged with the profound grief of a profound heart is shown in the pages of a happy lover’s meditation on what love may have in store for him in the death of the beloved :

‘The innocent sweet face that owed
None of its innocence to death.
The lips that used to laugh ; the knell
That bade the world beware of mirth ;
The heartless and intolerable
Indignity of “earth to earth ;”
At morn, remembering by degrees
That she I dreamed about was dead.’

And love not bereaved but rejected fills with dignity and awful tenderness such brief passages as this :

‘ His sorrow boasts a secret bliss
Which sorrow of itself beguiles ;
And Love in tears too noble is
For pity, save of Love in smiles.’

And this :

‘ He wakes renewed for all his smart,
His only love, and she is wed !
His fondness comes about his heart
As milk comes when the babe is dead.’

I must add the no less wonderful and spacious poetry of two brief lines :

‘ Alone, alone with sky and sea,
And her, the third simplicity.’

The composure and purity of the style cannot, however, affect our confession that the intervals of narrative in *The Angel in the House*, and some of the accessory persons and incidents of the story, are perilously ordinary and familiar. These persons and incidents are unwelcome to poetry as we modern men have learnt to hold it — apart from the social world we know. But this is an avowal that we are either content, or very weakly, very ineffectually, ill-content to live in a social world which we recognise as unworthy of poetry. Coventry Patmore, as we may understand his attitude, refused to be content with

such a division, and refused to be impotently ill-content. If the 'world' was unfit for his poem, he would reject the 'world', and he at least knew how to reject, and did not play at rejection. But, in fact, he did not believe—at any rate in his youth—in that division of daily life from poetry: where man and woman are, there poetry and dignity are not shut out. If the modern age chose to be ashamed of the manner in which it chose to live, to be associated, to prosper, and to order its affairs, a poet here and there might disclaim either the age or the shame; no other century had condescended to that kind of shame, and in many respects Coventry Patmore was not of his century. Paradoxically he was less of it because he had not a disrespect towards it, and was not afraid to write of it; and the very modern men are those who must find matter for their verses in the past. Coventry Patmore wrote of civilised conventions in the manner of a realist; and for this he had precedents older than his critics paused to remember. If so much of explanation is to be offered in answer to old criticisms—criticisms which, after all, our generation has not read, but only heard of—the apology touches, as I have said, but the mere scaffolding of the poem. When, long after the controversy was forgotten, Coventry Patmore died in the silence and seclusion of some years,

a newer company of critics wrote of him in the sense of the *Times*, where *The Angel* was named 'an uncontested English classic.' 'It is one of the most original, as it is one of the sweetest and simplest, productions of the century . . . sure to live, if merely for the distinction of its verse.' 'It has outlived', says the same writer, 'the sneers at the "domesticities." . . . The poetry of wedded love and of religious life has a future undreamt of by our superficial pagans.' Yet even this discerning writer (I have quoted from a note in the *Pall Mall Gazette*) has not penetrated far into the mystery of the poem; otherwise, even though it is, as he says, a poem of simplicity and sweetness, those are not the qualities that he would have found readiest to his pen in writing of it. *The Angel in the House*, with its small story and its somewhat sentimental title, is, like all else from the august and illustrious hand that wrote it, a poem of 'life, death, terror, love.'

The writer just cited refers to the little fashion of the last years of the past century, 'the sneer at the domesticities.' There are some things in both English and French domestic life that lack courtesy and grace, but it would be better done to restore these qualities than to deride the hearth in general. Those whose derision is a matter of fashion hardly merit deprecation; but,

as they profess to love France, to fear insularity, and so forth, they should consider what a face of wonder that most domestic nation just named must turn upon our uneasy English ironies, our incredible contempt for what every kind of Frenchman holds to be seriously honourable. But, apart from these recent embarrassed pranks, a good-humoured appreciation seems to have been at one time accorded to Coventry Patmore's poem as something appropriate for the reading of mere girls. Those who so appraised it did not suspect that the poem had grief and delight in a measure beyond the reach of many men. To a reader really aware of all that the poems of Coventry Patmore, early and late, express, the question is rather whether so much is endurable. Passages of *The Angel* and almost the whole of the Odes are so poignant that their pain and pleasure are more than the reader expects from poetry, more than many a reader expects from life. We are tempted to reply to this poetry that if these are sorrow and love, they are intolerable; that the more ordinary degrees of tenderness, pathos, and emotion are enough for the full heart of man; that such truth is too much for it. We have to look to Shakespeare for a passage equally hard to bear:

‘Of many thousand kisses the poor last
I lay upon thy lips’;

and to Chaucer, who so simply relates the lot of man :

‘ Now with his love, now in the coldē grave.’

Even the most careless reader must be aware that these penetrating lines are peculiarly quiet. There is nothing in them of the quality which much of the English poetry of the last thirty years may have misled him to think ‘passionate.’ Passion is not to be taken by violence, and the violent do not bear it away. Nor is the poet who intends to exalt the senses he who does in effect exalt them. The senses are exalted—almost reluctantly—by that spiritual poet, Coleridge. To him we owe the greatest magic of the eye, the ear, the touch. It is not altogether surprising, then, that a ‘passionate’ poet should have—as we hear—burlesqued Coventry Patmore’s poem in its story and in its versification.

Nevertheless, this octosyllabic versification is, in *The Angel in the House* and in its sequels, handled with considerable mastery. It would seem that the poet considered a certain severity—we will not call it rigidity—to be appropriate to this metre. Whether he arranges the lines in an alternate-rhyming system, so as to form a brief stanza of four lines, or whether he merely joins them in couplets, as in the following ‘Victories of Love’, he is strict in keeping the containing power of the little verse. What

elasticity he practises is in the buoyant diction ; the metre is not stretched. The sense lies easily within the boundaries within which it is held, but as closely as easily. Children are taught that if the frame of man were unpacked of its organs, no hand of man would be able to replace them all within the space they had filled ; and in a like manner, a quatrain of Coventry Patmore's writings, if any one, by fault of memory, should chance to spill its words and phrases, would baffle a restorer. There is assuredly nothing tight or thronged or hard, but the fulness is definite. How rich, for example, and how brief is this passage from that most meditative part of *The Angel in the House*, the *Wedding Sermon*. It is, by the way, in a fine defiance of the philistine and of the superior person alike and at once, that Coventry Patmore assigned his wise, wild, remote, and most beautiful subtle thoughts to a Dean in a cathedral pulpit. This is the passage in question :

‘ My memory with age is weak,
And I for hopes do oft suspect
The things I seem to recollect.’

Another equally full is this—

‘ Bright with the spirit shone the sense,
As with the sun a fleecy cloud.’

Winged, not weighted, with meaning again

is the quatrain from 'The Rosy Bosomed Hours':

'Far round, each blade of harvest bare
Its little load of bread;
Each furlong of that journey fair
With separate sweetness sped.'

Again:

'Blest in her place, blissful is she;
And I, departing, seem to be
Like the strange waif that comes to run
A few days flaming near the sun,
And carries back, through boundless night,
Its lessening memory of light.'

And again, this moving passage, written by the unfortunate one in whose ears music 'talked of nothing else' than his love:

'Therefore, when music breathes, I say,
. Away, away!
Thou art the voice of one I knew,
And what thou sayest is not yet true.'

And this meditation on childhood:

'And as to men's retreating eyes,
Beyond high mountains, higher rise,
Still further back there shone to me
The dazzling dusk of infancy.
Thither I looked, as, sick of night,
The Alpine shepherd looks to the height,
And does not see the day, 'tis true,
But sees the rosy tops that do.

.

Debtor to few, forgotten hours
Am I, that truths for me are powers.
Ah, happy hours, 'tis something yet
Not to forget that I forget.'

Equally exquisite and significant are the lines in which the bridegroom humbles himself before the humble bride, who has—

'A noble style that still
Imputes an unattained desert.'

The apology made for the choice of subject and scene in *The Angel in the House*, I am free to confess that the treatment of somewhat dowdy things in that poem takes now and then a questionable turn — 'sparkling humilities,' Ruskin charmingly called them in a letter, and he may be right. None the less was Patmore well advised to reconsider them in later editions, as he did almost to the end of his life. He made these alterations, I believe, rather for the sake of form than because he abated anything of his realism. Patmore several times asserts the identity of the earlier and the later poetry, yet he might surely have admitted, seeing what he thought of the vital significance of metre, that his philosophy, speaking immediately in the long or hasty breath of the Ode, was an emancipated thing, set free at a great price; and that, although the little ruled lines of the

octosyllabic *Angel* were to him not fetters but wings, yet the Odes flew on a larger and a nobler pinion. Their flight was into sidereal space and sidereal time; it went far, and through the essentially single human heart—intimately into time and space, remotely into the heart of hearts.

Coventry Patmore wrote several small books of essays. He did not give much attention to prose composition; but the impulse and directness of his meaning prompted a phrase of vigorous beauty and power, and a word of delicate distinction. In his prose he loved to call himself a theologian; but his theology, like his Toryism, was singularly and exclusively his own. Mr. Francis Thompson recognised, in the poem written at Patmore's death, the solemn, the terrible, characters of his religious vision. It is certain that this spiritual life was not without unrecorded suffering. Yet to many a friend he who bore the experience alone was a single-minded and simple companion, who loved the kind of humour he appropriately called 'fun', who recommended Mr. Frederick Greenwood to call the paper afterwards named *The Antijacobin* (price 2d.) *The Twopenny Damn*, and who rejoiced in the reading by a provincial neighbour of the name of his country house—Heron's Ghyll—as Herring's Gill. That

any one should believe a fellow-creature capable of giving his beautiful rural house and lands the name of Herring's Gill evoked from him a burst of delighted laughter. But he had not that form of the sense of humour of which men and women to-day are very strangely vain—the fear of derision.

Of Coventry Patmore's shorter early poems the faults are manifest enough. There is yet not one of them that is not the work of a poet; nay, of one of the few great poets. Some of them were written at no more than sixteen years of age. All are living. After all, the image of life is the measure and the proof of poetry. Then is poetry alive when a reader, moved and shaken like Leontes, looking on the figure of Hermione, having beheld her colour, her light, her age, knows her indeed, and confesses her at last, by another sign—'Oh! she's warm!'

ALICE MEYNELL

THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

"Par la grace infinie, Dieu les mist au monde ensemble."

ROUSIER DES DAMES.

BOOK I

THE PROLOGUE

'MINE is no horse with wings, to gain
 'The region of the spheral chime ;
'He does but drag a rumbling wain,
 'Cheer'd by the coupled bells of rhyme ;
'And if at Fame's bewitching note
 'My homely Pegasus pricks an ear,
'The world's cart-collar hugs his throat,
 'And he's too sage to kick or rear.'

Thus ever answer'd Vaughan his Wife,
 Who, more than he, desired his fame ;
But, in his heart, his thoughts were rife
 How for her sake to earn a name.
With bays poetic three times crown'd,
 And other college honours won,
He, if he chose, might be renown'd,
 He had but little doubt, she none ;

And in a loftier phrase he talk'd
With her, upon their Wedding-Day,
(The eighth), while through the fields they walk'}
Their children shouting by the way.

' Not careless of the gift of song,
' Nor out of love with noble fame,
' I, meditating much and long
' What I should sing, how win a name,
' Considering well what theme unsung,
' What reason worth the cost of rhyme,
' Remains to loose the poet's tongue
' In these last days, the dregs of time,
' Learn that to me, though born so late,
' There does, beyond desert, befall
' (May my great fortune make me great !)
' The first of themes, sung last of all.
' In green and undiscover'd ground,
' Yet near where many others sing,
I have the very well-head found
' Whence gushes the Pierian Spring.'

Then she : ' What is it, Dear ? The Life
' Of Arthur, or Jerusalem's Fall ?'
' Neither : your gentle self, my Wife,
' And love, that grows from one to all.
' And if I faithfully proclaim
' Of these the exceeding worthiness,

- ‘ Surely the sweetest wreath of Fame,
‘ Shall, to your hope, my brows caress ;
‘ And if, by virtue of my choice
‘ Of this, the most heart-touching theme
‘ That ever tuned a poet’s voice,
‘ I live, as I am bold to dream,
‘ To be delight to many days,
‘ And into silence only cease
‘ When those are still, who shared their bays
‘ With Laura and with Beatrice,
‘ Imagine, Love, how learned men
‘ Will deep-conceiv’d devices find,
‘ Beyond my purpose and my ken,
‘ An ancient bard of simple mind.
‘ You, Sweet, his Mistress, Wife, and Muse, ‘
‘ Were you for mortal woman meant ?
‘ Your praises give a hundred clues
‘ To mythological intent !
‘ And, severing thus the truth from trope,
‘ In you the Commentators see
‘ Outlines occult of abstract scope,
‘ A future for philosophy !
‘ Your arm’s on mine ! these are the meads
‘ In which we pass our living days ;
‘ There Avon runs, now hid with reeds,
‘ Now brightly brimming pebbly bays ;
‘ Those are our children’s songs that come
‘ With bells and bleatings of the sheep ;
‘ And there, in yonder English home,
‘ We thrive on mortal food and sleep !’

She laugh'd. How proud she always was
To feel how proud he was of her !
But he had grown distraught, because
The Muse's mood began to stir.

His purpose with performance crown'd,
He to his well-pleased Wife rehears'd,
When next their Wedding-Day came round,
His leisure's labour, 'Book the First.'

CANTO I

The Cathedral Close

PRELUDES

The Impossibili'y

Lo, Love's obey'd by all. 'Tis right
That all should know what they obey,
Lest erring conscience damp delight,
And folly laugh our joys away.
Thou Primal Love, who grantest wings
And voices to the woodland birds,
Grant me the power of saying things
Too simple and too sweet for words !

Love's Reality

I walk, I trust, with open eyes ;
I've travell'd half my worldly course ;
And in the way behind me lies
Much vanity and some remorse ;
I've lived to feel how pride may part
Spirits, tho' match'd like hand and glove ;
I've blush'd for love's abode, the heart ;
But have not disbelieved in love ;
Nor unto love, sole mortal thing
Of worth immortal, done the wrong
To count it, with the rest that sing,
Unworthy of a serious song ;

And love is my reward : for now,
When most of dead'ning time complain,
The myrtle blooms upon my brow,
Its odour quickens all my brain.

The Poet's Confidence

The richest realm of all the earth
Is counted still a heathen land :
Lo, I, like Joshua, now go forth
To give it into Israel's hand.
I will not hearken blame or praise ;
For so should I dishonour do
To that sweet Power by which these Lays
Alone are lovely, good, and true ;
Nor credence to the world's cries give,
Which ever preach and still prevent
Pure passion's high prerogative
To make, not follow, precedent.
From love's abysmal ether rare
If I to men have here made known
New truths, they, like new stars were there
Before, though not yet written down.
Moving but as the feelings move,
I run, or loiter with delight,
Or pause to mark where gentle Love
Persuades the soul from height to height.
Yct, know ye, though my words are gay
As David's dance, which Michal scorn'd,
If kindly you receive the Lay,
You shall be sweetly help'd and warn'd.

THE CATHEDRAL CLOSE

I

Once more I came to Sarum Close,
With joy half memory, half desire,
And breathed the sunny wind that rose
And blew the shadows o'er the Spire,
And toss'd the lilac's scented plumes,
And sway'd the chestnut's thousand cones,
And filled my nostrils with perfumes,
And shaped the clouds in waifs and zones,
And wafted down the serious strain
Of Sarum bells, when, true to time,
I reach'd the Dean's, with heart and brain
That trembled to the trembling chime.

2

'Twas half my home, six years ago.
The six years had not alter'd it :
Red-brick and ashlar, long and low,
With dormers and with oriels lit.
Geranium, lychnis, rose array'd
The windows, all wide open thrown ;
And some one in the Study play'd
The Wedding-March of Mendelssohn.

And there it was I last took leave :
'Twas Christmas : I remember'd now
The cruel girls, who feign'd to grieve,
Took down the evergreens ; and how
The holly into blazes woke
The fire, lighting the large, low room,
A dim, rich lustre of old oak
And crimson velvet's glowing gloom.

3

No change had touch'd Dean Churchill : kind,
By widowhood more than winters bent,
And settled in a cheerful mind,
As still forecasting heaven's content.
Well might his thoughts be fix'd on high,
Now she was there ! Within her face
Humility and dignity
Were met in a most sweet embrace.
She seem'd expressly sent below
To teach our erring minds to see
The rhythmic change of time's swift flow
As part of still eternity.
Her life, all honour, observed, with awe
Which cross experience could not mar,
The fiction of the Christian law
That all men honourable are ;
And so her smile at once conferr'd
High flattery and benign reproof ;
And I, a rude boy, strangely stirr'd,
Grew courtly in my own behoof.

The years, so far from doing her wrong,
Anointed her with gracious balm,
And made her brows more and more young
With wreaths of amaranth and palm.

4

Was this her eldest, Honor ; prude,
Who would not let me pull the swing ;
Who, kiss'd at Christmas, call'd me rude,
And, sobbing low, refused to sing ?
How changed ! In shape no slender Grace,
But Venus ; milder than the dove ;
Her mother's air ; her Norman face ;
Her large sweet eyes, clear lakes of love.
Mary I knew. In former time
Ailing and pale, she thought that bliss
Was only for a better clime,
And, heavenly overmuch, scorn'd this.
I, rash with theories of the right,
Which stretch'd the tether of my Creed,
But did not break it, held delight
Half discipline. We disagreed.
She told the Dean I wanted grace.
Now she was kindest of the three,
And soft wild roses deck'd her face.
And, what, was this my Mildred, she
To herself and all a sweet surprise ?
My Pet, who romp'd and roll'd a hoop ?
I wonder'd where those daisy eyes
Had found their touching curve and droop.

5

Unmannerly times ! But now we sat
Stranger than strangers ; till I caught
And answer'd Mildred's smile ; and that
Spread to the rest, and freedom brought.
The Dean talk'd little, looking on,
Of three such daughters justly vain.
What letters they had had from Bonn,
Said Mildred, and what plums from Spain !
By Honor I was kindly task'd
To excuse my never coming down
From Cambridge ; Mary smiled and ask'd
Were Kant and Goethe yet outgrown ?
And, pleased, we talk'd the old days o'er ;
And, parting, I for pleasure sigh'd.
To be there as a friend, (since more),
Seem'd then, seems still, excuse for pride ;
For something that abode endued
With temple-like repose, an air
Of life's kind purposes pursued
With order'd freedom sweet and fair.
A tent pitch'd in a world not right
It seem'd, whose inmates, every one,
On tranquil faces bore the light
Of duties beautifully done,
And humbly, though they had few peers,
Kept their own laws, which seem'd to be
The fair sum of six thousand years'
Traditions of civility.

CANTO II

Mary and Mildred

PRELUDES

I

The Paragon

WHEN I behold the skies aloft
Passing the pageantry of dreams,
The cloud whose bosom, cygnet-soft,
A couch for nuptial Juno seems,
The ocean broad, the mountains bright,
The shadowy vales with feeding herds,
I from my lyre the music smite,
Nor want for justly matching words.
All forces of the sea and air,
All interests of hill and plain,
I so can sing, in seasons fair,
That who hath felt may feel again.
Elated oft by such free songs,
I think with utterance free to raise
That hymn for which the whole world longs,
A worthy hymn in woman's praise ;
A hymn bright-noted like a bird's,
Arousing these song-sleepy times
With rhapsodies of perfect words,
Ruled by returning kiss of rhymes.

But when I look on her and hope
To tell with joy what I admire,
My thoughts lie cramp'd in narrow scope,
Or in the feeble birth expire ;
No mystery of well-woven speech,
No simplest phrase of tenderest fall,
No liken'd excellence can reach
Her, the most excellent of all,
The best half of creation's best,
Its heart to feel, its eye to see,
The crown and complex of the rest,
Its aim and its epitome.
Nay, might I utter my conceit,
'Twere after all a vulgar song,
For she's so simply, subtly sweet,
My deepest rapture does her wrong.
Yet is it now my chosen task
To sing her worth as Maid and Wife ;
Nor happier post than this I ask,
To live her laureate all my life.
On wings of love uplifted free,
And by her gentleness made great,
I'll teach how noble man should be
To match with such a lovely mate ;
And then in her may move the more
The woman's wish to be desired,
(By praise increased), till both shall soar,
With blissful emulations fired.
And, as geranium, pink, or rose
Is thrice itself through power of art,
So may my happy skill disclose
New fairness even in her fair heart ;

Until that churl shall nowhere be
 Who bends not, awed, before the throne
 Of her affecting majesty,
 So meek, so far unlike our own ;
 Until (for who may hope too much
 From her who wields the powers of love?)
 Our lifted lives at last shall touch
 That happy goal to which they move ;
 Until we find, as darkness rolls
 Away, and evil mists dissolve,
 That nuptial contrasts are the poles
 On which the heavenly spheres revolve.

II

Love at Large

Whene'er I come where ladies are,
 How sad soever I was before,
 Though like a ship frost-bound and far
 Withheld in ice from the ocean's roar,
 Third-winter'd in that dreadful dock,
 With stiffen'd cordage, sails decay'd,
 And crew that care for calm and shock
 Alike, too dull to be dismay'd,
 Yet, if I come where ladies are,
 How sad soever I was before,
 Then is my sadness banish'd far,
 And I am like that ship no more ;
 Or like that ship if the ice-field splits,
 Burst by the sudden polar Spring,
 And all thank God with their warming wits,
 And kiss each other and dance and sing,

And hoist fresh sails, that make the breeze
Blow them along the liquid sea,
Out of the North, where life did freeze,
Into the haven where they would be.

III

Love and Duty

Anne lived so truly from above,
She was so gentle and so good,
That duty bade me fall in love,
And 'but for that,' thought I, 'I should !'
I worshipp'd Kate with all my will.
In idle moods you seem to see
A noble spirit in a hill,
A human touch about a tree.

IV

A Distinction

The lack of lovely pride, in her
Who strives to please, my pleasure numbs,
And still the maid I most prefer
Whose care to please with pleasing comes.

MARY AND MILDRED

I

One morning, after Church, I walk'd
Alone with Mary on the lawn,
And felt myself, howe'er we talk'd,
To grave themes delicately drawn.
When she, delighted, found I knew
More of her peace than she supposed,
Our confidences heavenwards grew,
Like fox-glove buds, in pairs disclosed.
Our former faults did we confess,
Our ancient feud was more than heal'd.
And, with the woman's eagerness
For amity full-sign'd and seal'd,
She, offering up for sacrifice
Her heart's reserve, brought out to show
Some verses, made when she was ice
To all but Heaven, six years ago ;
Since happier grown ! I took and read
The neat-writ lines. She, void of guile,
Too late repenting, blush'd, and said,
I must not think about the style.

2

' Day after day, until to-day,
' Imaged the others gone before,
' The same dull task, the weary way,
' The weakness pardon'd o'er and o'er,

‘The thwarted thirst, too faintly felt,
‘For joy’s well-nigh forgotten life,
‘The restless heart, which, when I knelt,
‘Made of my worship barren strife.

‘Ah, whence to-day’s so sweet release,
‘This clearance light of all my care,
‘This conscience free, this fertile peace,
‘These softly folded wings of prayer,

‘This calm and more than conquering love,
‘With which nought evil dares to cope,
‘This joy that lifts no glance above,
‘For faith too sure, too sweet for hope?

‘O, happy time, too happy change,
‘It will not live, though fondly nurst !
Full soon the sun will seem as strange
‘As now the cloud which seems dispersed.’

3

She from a rose-tree shook the blight ;
And well she knew that I knew well
Her grace with silence to requite ;
And, answering now the luncheon-bell,
I laugh’d at Mildred’s laugh, which made
All melancholy wrong, its mood
Such sweet self-confidence display’d,
So glad a sense of present good.

4

I laugh'd and sigh'd : for I confess
I never went to Ball, or Fête,
Or Show, but in pursuit express
Of my predestinated mate ;
And thus to me, who had in sight
The happy chance upon the cards,
Each beauty blossom'd in the light
Of tender personal regards ;
And, in the records of my breast,
Red-letter'd, eminently fair,
Stood sixteen, who, beyond the rest,
By turns till then had been my care :
At Berlin three, one at St. Cloud,
At Chatteris, near Cambridge, one,
At Ely four, in London two,
Two at Bowness, in Paris none,
And, last and best, in Sarum three ;
But dearest of the whole fair troop,
In judgment of the moment, she
Whose daisy eyes had learn'd to droop.
Her very faults my fancy fired ;
My loving will, so thwarted, grew ;
And, bent on worship, I admired
Whate'er she was, with partial view.
And yet when, as to-day, her smile
Was prettiest, I could not but note
Honorina, less admired the while,
Was lovelier, though from love remote.

CANTO III

Honoria

PRELUDES

I

The Lover

HE meets, by heavenly chance express,
The destined maid ; some hidden hand
Unveils to him that loveliness
Which others cannot understand.
His merits in her presence grow,
To match the promise in her eyes,
And round her happy footsteps blow
The authentic airs of Paradise.
For joy of her he cannot sleep ;
Her beauty haunts him all the night ; ✓
It melts his heart, it makes him weep
For wonder, worship, and delight.
O, paradox of love, he longs,
Most humble when he most aspires,
To suffer scorn and cruel wrongs
From her he honours and desires.
Her graces make him rich, and ask
No guerdon ; this imperial style
Affronts him ; he disdains to bask,
The pensioner of her priceless smile.

He prays for some hard thing to do,
Some work of fame and labour immense,
To stretch the languid bulk and thew
Of love's fresh-born magnipotence.
No smallest boon were bought too dear,
Though barter'd for his love-sick life ;
Yet trusts he, with undaunted cheer,
To vanquish heaven, and call her Wife.
He notes how queens of sweetness still
Neglect their crowns, and stoop to mate ;
How, self-consign'd with lavish will,
They ask but love proportionate ;
How swift pursuit by small degrees,
Love's tactic, works like miracle ;
How valour, clothed in courtesies,
Brings down the haughtiest citadel ;
And therefore, though he merits not
To kiss the braid upon her skirt,
His hope, discouraged ne'er a jot,
Out-soars all possible desert.

II

Love a Virtue

Strong passions mean weak will, and he
Who truly knows the strength and bliss
Which are in love, will own with me
No passion but a virtue 'tis.
Few hear my word ; it soars above
The subtlest senses of the swarm
Of wretched things which know not love,
Their Psyche still a wingless worm.

Ice-cold seems heaven's noble glow
To spirits whose vital heat is hell ;
And to corrupt hearts even so
The songs I sing, the tale I tell.
These cannot see the robes of white
In which I sing of love. Alack,
But darkness shows in heavenly light,
Though whiteness, in the dark, is black !

III

Unthrift

Ah, wasteful woman, she who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing man cannot choose but pay,
How has she cheapen'd paradise ;
How given for nought her priceless gift,
How spoil'd the bread and spill'd the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine.

IV

The Attainment

You love? That's high as you shall go ;
For 'tis as true as Gospel text,
Not noble then is never so,
Either in this world or the next.

HONORIA

I

Grown weary with a week's exile
From those fair friends, I rode to see
The church-restorings ; lounged awhile,
And met the Dean ; was ask'd to tea,
And found their cousin, Frederick Graham,
At Honor's side. Was I concern'd,
If, when she sang, his colour came,
That mine, as with a buffet, burn'd ?
A man to please a girl ! thought I,
Retorting his forced smiles, the shrouds
Of wrath, so hid as she was by,
Sweet moon between her lighted clouds !

2

Whether this Cousin was the cause
I know not, but I seem'd to see,
The first time then, how fair she was,
How much the fairest of the three.
Each stopp'd to let the other go ;
But, time-bound, he arose the first.
Stay'd he in Sarum long ? If so
I hoped to see him at the Hurst.

No : he had call'd here, on his way
To Portsmouth, where the Arrogant,
His ship, was ; he should leave next day,
For two years' cruise in the Levant.

3

Had love in her yet struck its germs?
I watch'd. Her farewell show'd me plain
She loved, on the majestic terms
That she should not be loved again.
And so her cousin, parting, felt.
Hope in his voice and eye was dead.
Compassion did my malice melt ;
Then went I home to a restless bed.
I, who admired her too, could see
His infinite remorse at this
Great mystery, that she should be
So beautiful, yet not be his,
And, pitying, long'd to plead his part ;
But scarce could tell, so strange my whim,
Whether the weight upon my heart
Was sorrow for myself or him.

4

She was all mildness ; yet 'twas writ
In all her grace, most legibly,
'He that's for heaven itself unfit,
'Let him not hope to merit me.'

And such a challenge, quite apart
From thoughts of love, humbled, and thus
To sweet repentance moved my heart,
And made me more magnanimous,
And led me to review my life,
Inquiring where in aught the least,
If question were of her for wife,
Ill might be mended, hope increas'd.
Not that I soar'd so far above
Myself, as this great hope to dare ;
And yet I well foresaw that love
Might hope where reason must despair ;
And, half-resenting the sweet pride
Which would not ask me to admire,
'Oh,' to my secret heart I sigh'd,
'That I were worthy to desire !'

5

As drowsiness my brain reliev'd,
A shrill defiance of all to arms,
Shriek'd by the stable-cock, receiv'd
An angry answer from three farms.
And, then, I dream'd that I, her knight,
A clarion's haughty pathos heard,
And rode securely to the fight,
Cased in the scarf she had conferr'd ;
And there, the bristling lists behind,
Saw many, and vanquish'd all I saw
Of her unnumber'd cousin-kind,
In Navy, Army, Church, and Law ;

Smitten, the warriors somehow turn'd
To Sarum choristers, whose song,
Mix'd with celestial sorrow, yearn'd
With joy no memory can prolong ;
And phantasms as absurd and sweet
Merged each in each in endless chace,
And everywhere I seem'd to meet
The haunting fairness of her face.

CANTO IV
The Morning Call

PRELUDES

I

The Rose of the World

Lo, when the Lord made North and South
And sun and moon ordained, He,
Forthbringing each by word of mouth
In order of its dignity,
Did man from the crude clay express
By sequence, and, all else decreed,
He form'd the woman ; nor might less
Than Sabbath such a work succeed.
And still with favour singled out,
Marr'd less than man by mortal fall,
Her disposition is devout,
Her countenance angelical ;
The best things that the best believe
Are in her face so kindly writ
The faithless, seeing her, conceive
Not only heaven, but hope of it ;
No idle thought her instinct shrouds,
But fancy chequers settled sense,
Like alteration of the clouds
On noonday's azure permanence ;

Pure dignity, composure, ease
 Declare affections nobly fix'd,
And impulse sprung from due degrees
 Of sense and spirit sweetly mix'd.
Her modesty, her chiefest grace,
 The cestus clasping Venus' side,
How potent to deject the face
 Of him who would affront its pride !
Wrong dares not in her presence speak,
 Nor spotted thought its taint disclose
Under the protest of a cheek
 Outbragging Nature's boast the rose.
In mind and manners how discreet ;
 How artless in her very art ;
How candid in discourse ; how sweet
 The concord of her lips and heart ;
How simple and how circumspect ;
 How subtle and how fancy-free ;
Though sacred to her love, how deck'd
 With unexclusive courtesy ;
How quick in talk to see from far
 The way to vanquish or evade ;
How able her persuasions are
 To prove, her reasons to persuade ;
How (not to call true instinct's bent
 And woman's very nature, harm),
How amiable and innocent
 Her pleasure in her power to charm ;
How humbly careful to attract,
 Though crown'd with all the soul desires,
Connubial aptitude exact,
 Diversity that never tires.

II

The Tribute

Boon Nature to the woman bows ;
She walks in earth's whole glory clad,
And, chiefest far herself of shows,
All others help her, and are glad :
No splendour 'neath the sky's proud dome
But serves for her familiar wear ;
The far-fetch'd diamond finds its home
Flashing and smouldering in her hair ;
For her the seas their pearls reveal ;
Art and strange lands her pomp supply
With purple, chrome, and cochineal,
Ochre, and lapis lazuli ;
The worm its golden woof presents ;
Whatever runs, flies, dives, or delves,
All doff for her their ornaments,
Which suit her better than themselves ;
And all, by this their power to give,
Proving her right to take, proclaim
Her beauty's clear prerogative
To profit so by Eden's blame.

III

Compensation

That nothing here may want its praise,
Know, she who in her dress reveals
A fine and modest taste, displays
More loveliness than she conceals.

THE MORNING CALL

I

‘ By meekness charm’d, or proud to allow
 ‘ A queenly claim to live admired,
‘ Full many a lady has ere now
 ‘ My apprehensive fancy fired,
‘ And woven many a transient chain ;
 ‘ But never lady like to this,
‘ Who holds me as the weather-vane
 ‘ Is held by yonder clematis.
‘ She seems the life of nature’s powers ;
 ‘ Her beauty is the genial thought
‘ Which makes the sunshine bright ; the flowers,
 ‘ But for their hint of her, were nought.’

2

A voice, the sweeter for the grace
 Of suddenness, while thus I dream’d,
‘ Good morning !’ said or sang. Her face
 The mirror of the morning seem’d.
Her sisters in the garden walk’d,
 And would I come ? Across the Hall
She led me ; and we laugh’d and talk’d,
 And praised the Flower-show and the Ball ;

And Mildred's pinks had gain'd the Prize ;
And, stepping like the light-foot fawn,
She brought me ' Wiltshire Butterflies,'
The Prize-book ; then we paced the lawn,
Close-cut, and with geranium-plots,
A rival glow of green and red ;
Then counted sixty apricots
On one small tree ; the gold-fish fed ;
And watch'd where, black with scarlet tans,
Proud Psyche stood and flash'd like flame,
Showing and shutting splendid fans ;
And in the prize we found its name.

3

The sweet hour lapsed, and left my breast
A load of joy and tender care ;
And this delight, which life oppress'd,
To fix'd aims grew, that ask'd for pray'r.
I rode home slowly ; whip-in-hand
And soil'd bank-notes all ready, stood
The Farmer who farm'd all my land,
Except the little Park and Wood ;
And, with the accustom'd compliment
Of talk, and beef, and frothing beer,
I, my own steward, took my rent,
Three hundred pounds for half the year ;
Our witnesses the Cook and Groom,
We sign'd the lease for seven years more,
And bade Good-day ; then to my room
I went, and closed and lock'd the door,

And cast myself down on my bed,
And there, with many a blissful tear,
I vow'd to love and pray'd to wed
The maiden who had grown so dear ;
Thank'd God who had set her in my path ;
And promised, as I hoped to win,
That I would never dim my faith
By the least selfishness or sin ;
Whatever in her sight I'd seem
I'd truly be ; I'd never blend
With my delight in her a dream
'Twould change her cheek to comprehend ;
And, if she wish'd it, I'd prefer
Another's to my own success ;
And always seek the best for her,
With unofficial tenderness.

4

Rising, I breathed a brighter clime,
And found myself all self above,
And, with a charity sublime,
Contemn'd not those who did not love ;
And I could not but feel that then
I shone with something of her grace,
And went forth to my fellow men
My commendation in my face.

CANTO V
The Violets

PRELUDES

I

The Comparison

WHERE she succeeds with cloudless brow,
In common and in holy course,
He fails, in spite of prayer and vow
And agonies of faith and force ;
Or, if his suit with Heaven prevails
To righteous life, his virtuous deeds
Lack beauty, virtue's badge ; she fails
More graciously than he succeeds.
Her spirit, compact of gentleness,
If Heaven postpones or grants her pray'r,
Conceives no pride in its success,
And in its failure no despair ;
But his, enamour'd of its hurt,
Baffled, blasphemes, or, not denied,
Crows from the dunghill of desert,
And wags its ugly wings for pride.
He's never young nor ripe ; she grows
More infantine, auroral, mild,
And still the more she lives and knows
The lovelier she's express'd a child.

Say that she wants the will of man
To conquer fame, not check'd by cross,
Nor moved when others bless or ban ;
She wants but what to have were loss.
Or say she wants the patient brain
To track shy truth ; her facile wit
At that which he hunts down with pain
Flies straight, and does exactly hit.
Were she but half of what she is,
He twice himself, mere love alone,
Her special crown, as truth is his,
Gives title to the worthier throne ;
For love is substance, truth the form ;
Truth without love were less than nought ;
But blindest love is sweet and warm,
And full of truth not shaped by thought ;
And therefore in herself she stands
Adorn'd with undeficient grace,
Her happy virtues taking hands,
Each smiling in another's face.
So, dancing round the Tree of Life,
They make an Eden in her breast,
While his, disjointed and at strife,
Proud-thoughted, do not bring him rest.

II

Love in Tears

If fate Love's dear ambition mar,
And load his breast with hopeless pain,
And seem to blot out sun and star,
Love, won or lost, is countless gain ;

His sorrow boasts a secret bliss
Which sorrow of itself beguiles,
And Love in tears too noble is
For pity, save of Love in smiles.
But, looking backward through his tears,
With vision of maturer scope,
How often one dead joy appears
The platform of some better hope !
And, let us own, the sharpest smart
Which human patience may endure
Pays light for that which leaves the heart
More generous, dignified, and pure.

III

Prospective Faith

They safely walk in darkest ways
Whose youth is lighted from above,
Where, through the senses' silvery haze,
Dawns the veil'd moon of nuptial love.
Who is the happy husband? He
Who, scanning his unwedded life,
Thanks Heaven, with a conscience free,
'Twas faithful to his future wife.

IV

Venus Victrix

Fatal in force, yet gentle in will,
Defeats, from her, are tender pacts,
For, like the kindly lodestone, still
She's drawn herself by what she attracts.

THE VIOLETS

I

I went not to the Dean's unbid :
I would not have my mystery,
From her so delicately hid,
The guess of gossips at their tea.
A long, long week, and not once there,
Had made my spirit sick and faint,
And lack-love, foul as love is fair,
Perverted all things to complaint.
How vain the world had grown to be !
How mean all people and their ways,
How ignorant their sympathy,
And how impertinent their praise ;
What they for virtuousness esteem'd,
How far removed from heavenly right ;
What pettiness their trouble seem'd,
How undelightful their delight ;
To my necessity how strange
The sunshine and the song of birds ;
How dull the clouds' continual change,
How foolishly content the herds ;
How unaccountable the law
Which bade me sit in blindness here,
While she, the sun by which I saw,
Shed splendour in an idle sphere !

And then I kiss'd her stolen glove,
And sigh'd to reckon and define
The modes of martyrdom in love,
And how far each one might be mine.
I thought how love, whose vast estate
Is earth and air and sun and sea,
Encounters oft the beggar's fate,
Despised on score of poverty ;
How Heaven, inscrutable in this,
Lets the gross general make or mar
The destiny of love, which is
So tender and particular ;
How nature, as unnatural
And contradicting nature's source,
Which is but love, seems most of all
Well pleased to harry true love's course ;
How, many times, it comes to pass
That trifling shades of temperament,
Affecting only one, alas,
Not love, but love's success prevent ;
How manners often falsely paint
The man ; how passionate respect,
Hid by itself, may bear the taint
Of coldness, and a dull neglect ;
And how a little outward dust
Can a clear merit quite o'ercloud,
And make her fatally unjust,
And him desire a darker shroud ;
How senseless opportunity
Gives baser men the better chance ;
How powers, adverse else, agree
To cheat her in her ignorance ;

How Heaven its very self conspires
With man and nature against love,
As pleased to couple cross desires,
And cross where they themselves approve
Wretched were life, if the end were now !
But this gives tears to dry despair,
Faith shall be blest, we know not how,
And love fulfill'd, we know not where.

2

While thus I grieved, and kiss'd her glove,
My man brought in her note to say,
Papa had bid her send his love,
And would I dine with them next day ?
They had learn'd and practised Purcell's glee,
To sing it by to-morrow night.
The Postscript was : Her sisters and she
Inclosed some violets, blue and white ;
She and her sisters found them where
I wager'd once no violets grew ;
So they had won the gloves. And there
The violets lay, two white, one blue.

CANTO VI

The Dean

PRELUDES

I

Perfect Love rare

MOST rare is still most noble found,
Most noble still most incomplete ;
Sad law, which leaves King Love uncrown'd
In this obscure, terrestrial seat !
With bale more sweet than others' bliss,
And bliss more wise than others' bale,
The secrets of the world are his,
And freedom without let or pale.
O, zealous good, O, virtuous glee,
Religious, and without alloy,
O, privilege high, which none but he
Who highly merits can enjoy ;
O, Love, who art that fabled sun
Which all the world with bounty loads,
Without respect of realms, save one,
And gilds with double lustre Rhodes ;
A day of whose delicious life,
Though full of terrors, full of tears,
Is better than of other life
A hundred thousand million years ;

Thy heavenly splendour magnifies
The least commixture of earth's mould,
Cheapens thyself in thine own eyes,
And makes the foolish mocker bold.

II

Love Justified

What if my pole-star of respect
Be dim to others? Shall their 'Nay,'
Presumably their own defect,
Invalidate my heart's strong 'Yea' ?
And can they rightly me condemn,
If I, with partial love, prefer?
I am not more unjust to them,
But only not unjust to her.
Leave us alone ! After a while,
This pool of private charity
Shall make its continent an isle,
And roll, a world-embracing sea ;
This foolish zeal of lip for lip,
This fond, self-sanction'd, wilful zest,
Is that elect relationship
Which forms and sanctions all the rest ;
This little germ of nuptial love,
Which springs so simply from the sod,
The root is, as my song shall prove,
Of all our love to man and God.

III

Love Serviceable

What measure Fate to him shall mete
Is not the noble Lover's care ;
He's heart-sick with a longing sweet
To make her happy as she's fair.
Oh, misery, should she him refuse,
And so her dearest, good mistake !
His own success he thus pursues
With frantic zeal for her sole sake.
To lose her were his life to blight,
Being loss to hers ; to make her his,
Except as helping her delight,
He calls but accidental bliss ;
And, holding life as so much pelf
To buy her posies, learns this lore :
He does not rightly love himself
Who does not love another more.

IV

A Riddle Solved

Kind souls, you wonder why, love you,
When you, you wonder why, love none.
We love, Fool, for the good we do,
Not that which unto us is done !

THE DEAN

I

The Ladies rose. I held the door,
And sigh'd, as her departing grace
Assured me that she always wore
A heart as happy as her face ;
And, jealous of the winds that blew,
I dreaded, o'er the tasteless wine,
What fortune momentarily might do
To hurt the hope that she'd be mine.

2

Towards my mark the Dean's talk set :
He praised my 'Notes on Abury',
Read when the Association met
At Sarum ; he was pleased to see
I had not stopp'd, as some men had,
At Wrangler and Prize Poet ; last,
He hoped the business was not bad
I came about : then the wine pass'd.

3

A full glass prefaced my reply :
I loved his daughter, Honor ; I told
My estate and prospects ; might I try
To win her ? At my words so bold

My sick heart sank. Then he : He gave
His glad consent, if I could get
Her love. A dear, good Girl ! she'd have
Only three thousand pounds as yet ;
More bye and bye. Yes, his good will
Should go with me ; he would not stir ;
He and my father in old time still
Wish'd I should one day marry her ;
But God so seldom lets us take
Our chosen pathway, when it lies
In steps that either mar or make
Or alter others' destinies,
That, though his blessing and his pray'r
Had help'd, should help, my suit, yet he
Left all to me, his passive share
Consent and opportunity.
My chance, he hoped, was good : I'd won
Some name already ; friends and place
Appear'd within my reach, but none
Her mind and manners would not grace.
Girls love to see the men in whom
They invest their vanities admired ;
Besides, where goodness is, there room
For good to work will be desired.
'Twas so with one now pass'd away ;
And what she was at twenty-two,
Honor was now ; and he might say
Mine was a choice I could not rue.

4

He ceased, and gave his hand. He had won
 (And all my heart was in my word),
From me the affection of a son,
 Whichever fortune Heaven conferr'd !
Well, well, would I take more wine? Then go
 To her ; she makes tea on the lawn
These fine warm afternoons. And so
 We went whither my soul was drawn ;
And her light-hearted ignorance
 Of interest in our discourse
Fill'd me with love, and seem'd to enhance
 Her beauty with pathetic force,
As, through the flowery mazes sweet,
 Fronting the wind that flutter'd blythe,
And loved her shape, and kiss'd her feet,
 Shown to their insteps proud and lithe,
She approach'd, all mildness and young trust,
 And ever her chaste and noble air
Gave to love's feast its choicest gust,
 A vague, faint augury of despair.

CANTO VII

Ætna and the Moon

PRELUDES

I

Love's Immortality

How vilely 'twere to misdeserve
The poet's gift of perfect speech,
In song to try, with trembling nerve,
The limit of its utmost reach,
Only to sound the wretched praise
Of what to-morrow shall not be ;
So mocking with immortal bays
The cross-bones of mortality !
I do not thus. My faith is fast
That all the loveliness I sing
Is made to bear the mortal blast,
And blossom in a better Spring.
Doubts of eternity ne'er cross
The Lover's mind, divinely clear :
For ever is the gain or loss
Which maddens him with hope or fear :
So trifles serve for his relief,
And trifles make him sick and pale ;
And yet his pleasure and his grief
Are both on a majestic scale.

The chance, indefinitely small,
Of issue infinitely great,
Eclipses finite interests all,
And has the dignity of fate.

II

Heaven and Earth

How long shall men deny the flower
Because its roots are in the earth,
And crave with tears from God the dower
They have, and have despised as dearth,
And scorn as low their human lot,
With frantic pride, too blind to see
That standing on the head makes not
Either for ease or dignity !
But fools shall feel like fools to find
(Too late inform'd) that angels' mirth
Is one in cause, and mode, and kind
With that which they profaned on earth.

ÆTNA AND THE MOON

I

To soothe my heart I, feigning, seized
A pen, and, showering tears, declared
My unfeign'd passion ; sadly pleased
Only to dream that so I dared.
Thus was the fervid truth confess'd,
But wild with paradox ran the plea,
As wilfully in hope depress'd,
Yet bold beyond hope's warranty :

2

'O, more than dear, be more than just,
'And do not deafly shut the door !
'I claim no right to speak ; I trust
'Mercy, not right ; yet who has more ?
'For, if more love makes not more fit,
'Of claimants here none's more nor less,
'Since your great worth does not permit
'Degrees in our unworthiness.
'Yet, if there's aught that can be done
'With arduous labour of long years,
'By which you'll say that you'll be won,
'O tell me, and I'll dry my tears.

- ‘ Ah, no ; if loving cannot move,
‘ How foolishly must labour fail !
‘ The use of deeds is to show love ;
‘ If signs suffice let these avail :
‘ Your name pronounced brings to my heart
‘ A feeling like the violet’s breath,
‘ Which does so much of heaven impart
‘ It makes me amorous of death ;
‘ The winds that in the garden toss
‘ The Guelder-roses give me pain,
‘ Alarm me with the dread of loss,
‘ Exhaust me with the dream of gain ;
‘ I’m troubled by the clouds that move ;
‘ Tired by the breath which I respire ;
‘ And ever, like a torch, my love,
‘ Thus agitated, flames the higher ;
‘ All’s hard that has not you for goal ;
‘ I scarce can move my hand to write,
‘ For love engages all my soul,
‘ And leaves the body void of might ;
‘ The wings of will spread idly, as do
‘ The bird’s that in a vacuum lies ;
‘ My breast, asleep with dreams of you,
‘ Forgets to breathe, and bursts in sighs ;
‘ I see no rest this side the grave,
‘ No rest nor hope, from you apart ;
‘ Your life is in the rose you gave,
‘ Its perfume suffocates my heart ;
‘ There’s no refreshment in the breeze ;
‘ The heaven o’erwhelms me with its blue ;
‘ I faint beside the dancing seas
‘ Winds, skies, and waves are only you ;

' The thought or act which not intends
 ' You service, seems a sin and shame ;
 ' In that one only object ends
 ' Conscience, religion, honour, fame.
 ' Ah, could I put off love ! Could we
 ' Never have met ! What calm, what ease !
 ' Nay, but, alas, this remedy
 ' Were ten times worse than the disease !
 ' For when, indifferent, I pursue
 ' The world's best pleasures for relief,
 ' My heart, still sickening back to you,
 ' Finds none like memory of its grief ;
 ' And, though 'twere very hell to hear
 ' You felt such misery as I,
 ' All good, save you, were far less dear
 ' Than is that ill with which I die !
 ' Where'er I go, wandering forlorn,
 ' You are the world's love, life, and glee :
 ' Oh, wretchedness not to be borne
 ' If she that's Love should not love me !

3

I could not write another word,
 Through pity for my own distress ;
 And forth I went, untimely stirr'd
 To make my misery more or less.
 I went, beneath the heated noon,
 To where, in her simplicity,
 She sate at work ; and, as the Moon
 On Ætna smiles, she smiled on me.

But, now and then, in cheek and eyes,
I saw, or fancied, such a glow
As when, in summer-evening skies,
Some say, 'It lightens', some say, 'No.'
'Honoriam,' I began——No more.
The Dean, by ill or happy hap,
Came home : and Wolf burst in before,
And put his nose upon her lap.

CANTO VIII

Sarum Plain

PRELUDES

I

Life of Life

WHAT'S that, which, ere I spake, was gone :

So joyful and intense a spark

That, whilst o'erhead the wonder shone,

The day, before but dull, grew dark ?

I do not know ; but this I know,

That, had the splendour lived a year,

The truth that I some heavenly show

Did see, could not be now more clear.

This know I too : might mortal breath

Express the passion then inspired,

Evil would die a natural death,

And nothing transient be desired ;

And error from the soul would pass,

And leave the senses pure and strong

As sunbeams. But the best, alas,

Has neither memory nor tongue !

II

The Revelation

An idle poet, here and there,
Looks round him ; but, for all the rest,
The world, unfathomably fair,
Is duller than a witling's jest.
Love wakes men, once a lifetime each ;
They lift their heavy lids, and look ;
And, lo, what one sweet page can teach,
They read with joy, then shut the book.
And some give thanks, and some blaspheme,
And most forget ; but, either way,
That and the Child's unheeded dream
Is all the light of all their day.

III

The Spirit's Epochs

Not in the crises of events,
Of compass'd hopes, or fears fulfill'd,
Or acts of gravest consequence,
Are life's delight and depth reveal'd.
The day of days was not the day ;
That went before, or was postponed ;
The night Death took our lamp away
Was not the night on which we groan'd.
I drew my bride, beneath the moon,
Across my threshold ; happy hour !
But, ah, the walk that afternoon
We saw the water-flags n flower !

IV

The Prototype

Lo, there, whence love, life, light are pour'd
 Veil'd with impenetrable rays,
Amidst the presence of the Lord
 Co-equal Wisdom laughs and plays.
Female and male God made the man ;
 His image is the whole, not half ;
And in our love we dimly scan
 The love which is between Himself.

V

The Praise of Love

Spirit of Knowledge, grant me this :
 A simple heart and subtle wit
To praise the thing whose praise it is
 That all which can be praised is it.

SARUM PLAIN

I

Breakfast enjoy'd, 'mid hush of boughs
And perfumes thro' the windows blown ;
Brief worship done, which still endows
The day with beauty not its own ;
With intervening pause, that paints
Each act with honour, life with calm
(As old processions of the Saints
At every step have wands of palm),
We rose ; the ladies went to dress,
And soon return'd with smiles ; and then,
Plans fix'd, to which the Dean said ' Yes ',
Once more we drove to Salisbury Plain.
We past my house (observed with praise
By Mildred, Mary acquiesced),
And left the old and lazy grays
Below the hill, and walk'd the rest.

2

The moods of love are like the wind,
And none knows whence or why they rise :
I ne'er before felt heart and mind
So much affected through mine eyes.

How cognate with the flatter'd air,
How form'd for earth's familiar zone,
She moved ; how feeling and how fair
For others' pleasure and her own !
And, ah, the heaven of her face !
How, when she laugh'd, I seem'd to see
The gladness of the primal grace,
And how, when grave, its dignity !
Of all she was, the least not less
Delighted the devoted eye ;
No fold or fashion of her dress
Her fairness did not sanctify.
I could not else than grieve. What cause?
Was I not blest ? Was she not there ?
Likely my own ? Ah, that it was :
How like seem'd 'likely' to despair !

3

And yet to see her so benign,
So honourable and womanly,
In every maiden kindness mine,
And full of gayest courtesy,
Was pleasure so without alloy,
Such unproved, sufficient bliss,
I almost wish'd, the while, that joy
Might never further go than this.
So much it was as now to walk,
And humbly by her gentle side
Observe her smile and hear her talk,
Could it be more to call her Bride ?

I feign'd her won ; the mind finite,
Puzzled and fagg'd by stress and strain
To comprehend the whole delight,
Made bliss more hard to bear than pain.
All good, save heart to hold, so summ'd
And grasp'd, the thought smote, like a knife,
How laps'd mortality had numb'd
The feelings to the feast of life ;
How passing good breathes sweetest breath ;
And love itself at highest reveals
More black than bright, commending death
By teaching how much life conceals.

4

But happier passions these subdued,
When from the close and sultry lane,
With eyes made bright by what they view'd,
We emerged upon the mounded Plain.
As to the breeze a flag unfurls,
My spirit expanded, sweetly embraced
By those same gusts that shook her curls
And vex'd the ribbon at her waist.
To the future cast I future cares ;
Breathed with a heart unfreighted, free,
And laugh'd at the presumptuous airs
That with her muslins folded me ;
Till, one vague rack along my sky,
The thought that she might ne'er be mine
Lay half forgotten by the eye
So feasted with the sun's warm shine.

5

By the great stones we chose our ground
For shade ; and there, in converse sweet,
Took luncheon. On a little mound
Sat the three ladies ; at their feet
I sat ; and smelt the heathy smell,
Pluck'd harebells, tuned the telescope
To the country round. My life went well,
For once, without the wheels of hope ;
And I despised the Druid rocks
That scowl'd their chill gloom from above,
Like churls whose stolid wisdom mocks
The lightness of immortal love.
And, as we talk'd, my spirit quaff'd
The sparkling winds ; the candid skies
At our untruthful strangeness laugh'd ;
I kiss'd with mine her smiling eyes ;
And sweet familiarness and awe
Prevail'd that hour on either part,
And in the eternal light I saw
That she was mine ; though yet my heart
Could not conceive, nor would confess
Such contentation ; and there grew
More form and more fair stateliness
Than heretofore between us two.

CANTO IX

Sahara

PRELUDES

I

The Wife's Tragedy

MAN must be pleased ; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure ; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
How often flings for nought, and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him ;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes ;
And if he once, by shame oppress'd, -
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers ;
And whilst his love has any life,
Or any eye to see her charms,
At any time, she's still his wife,
Dearly devoted to his arms ;

She loves with love that cannot tire ;
And when, ah woe, she loves alone,
Through passionâte duty love springs higher,
As grass grows taller round a stone.

II

Common Graces

Is nature in thee too spiritless,
Ignoble, impotent, and dead,
To prize her love and loveliness
The more for being thy daily bread ?
And art thou one of that vile crew
Which see no splendour in the sun,
Praising alone the good that's new,
Or over, or not yet begun ?
And has it dawn'd on thy dull wits
That love warms many as soft a nest,
That, though swathed round with benefits,
Thou art not singularly blest ?
And fail thy thanks for gifts divine,
The common food of many a heart,
Because they are not only thine ?
Beware lest in the end thou art
Cast for thy pride forth from the fold,
Too good to feel the common grace
Of blissful myriads who behold
For evermore the Father's face.

III

The Zest of Life

Give thanks. It is not time misspent ;
Worst fare this betters, and the best,
Wanting this natural condiment,
Breeds crudeness, and will not digest.
The grateful love the Giver's law ;
But those who eat, and look no higher,
From sin or doubtful sanction draw
The biting sauce their feasts require.
Give thanks for nought, if you've no more,
And, having all things, do not doubt
That nought, with thanks, is blest before
Whate'er the word can give, without.

IV

Fool and Wise

Endow the fool with sun and moon,
Being his, he holds them mean and low ;
But to the wise a little boon
Is great, because the giver's so.

SAHARA

I

I stood by Honor and the Dean,
They seated in the London train.
A month from her ! yet this had been,
Ere now, without such bitter pain.
But neighbourhood makes parting light,
And distance remedy has none ;
Alone, she near, I felt as might
A blind man sitting in the sun ;
She near, all for the time was well ;
Hope's self, when we were far apart,
With lonely feeling, like the smell
Of heath on mountains, fill'd my heart.
To see her seem'd delight's full scope,
And her kind smile, so clear of care,
Ev'n then, though darkening all my hope,
Gilded the cloud of my despair.

2

She had forgot to bring a book.
I lent one ; blamed the print for old ;
And did not tell her that she took
A Petrarch worth its weight in gold.
I hoped she'd lose it ; for my love
Was grown so dainty, high, and nice,
It prized no luxury above
The sense of fruitless sacrifice.

3

The bell rang, and, with shrieks like death,
Link catching link, the long array,
With ponderous pulse and fiery breath,
Proud of its burthen, swept away ;
And through the lingering crowd I broke,
Sought the hill-side, and thence, heart-sick,
Beheld, far off, the little smoke
Along the landscape kindling quick.

4

What should I do, where should I go,
Now she was gone, my love ! for mine
She was, whatever here below
Cross'd or usurp'd my right divine.
Life, without her, was vain and gross,
The glory from the world was gone,
And on the gardens of the Close
As on Sahara shone the sun.
Oppress'd with her departed grace,
My thoughts on ill surmises fed ;
The harmful influence of the place
She went to fill'd my soul with dread.
She, mixing with the people there,
Might come back alter'd having caught
The foolish, fashionable air
Of knowing all, and feeling nought.
Or, giddy with her beauty's praise,
She'd scorn our simple country life,
Its wholesome nights and tranquil days,
And would not deign to be my Wife.

‘My Wife’, ‘my Wife’, ah, tenderest word !
How oft, as fearful she might hear,
Whispering that name of ‘Wife’, I heard
The chiming of the inmost sphere.

5

I pass’d the home of my regret.
The clock was striking in the hall,
And one sad window open yet,
Although the dews began to fall.
Ah, distance show’d her beauty’s scope !
How light of heart and innocent
That loveliness which sicken’d hope
And wore the world for ornament !
How perfectly her life was framed ;
And, thought of in that passionate mood,
How her affecting graces shamed
The vulgar life that was but good !

6

I wonder’d, would her bird be fed,
Her rose-plots watered, she not by ;
Loading my breast with angry dread
Of light, unlikely injury.
So, fill’d with love and fond remorse,
I paced the Close, its every part
Endow’d with reliquary force
To heal and raise from death my heart.
How tranquil and unsecular
The precinct ! Once, through yonder gate,

I saw her go, and knew from ar
Her love-lit form and gentle state.
Her dress had brush'd this wicket ; here
She turn'd her face, and laugh'd, with light
Like moonbeams on a wavering mere.
Weary beforehand of the night,
I went ; the blackbird, in the wood,
Talk'd by himself, and eastward grew
In heaven the symbol of my mood,
Where one bright star engross'd the blue.

CANTO X

Going to Church

PRELUDES

I

The Joyful Wisdom.

WOULD Wisdom for herself be woo'd,
And wake the foolish from his dream,
She must be glad as well as good,
And must not only be, but seem.
Beauty and joy are hers by right ;
And knowing this, I wonder less
That she's so scorned, when falsely dight
In misery and ugliness.
What's that which Heaven to man endears,
And that which eyes no sooner see
Than the heart says, with floods of tears,
'Ah, that's the thing which I would be !'
Not childhood full of frown and fret ;
Not youth, impatient to disown
Those visions high, which to forget
Were worse than never to have known ;
Not worldlings, in whose fair outside
Nor courtesy nor justice fails,
Thanks to cross-pulling vices tied,
Like Samson's foxes, by the tails ;

Not poets ; real things are dreams,
When dreams are as realities,
And boasters of celestial gleams
Go stumbling aye for want of eyes ;
Not patriots nor people's men,
In whom two worse-match'd evils meet
Than ever sought Adullam's den,
Base conscience and a high conceit ;
Not new-made saints, their feelings iced,
Their joy in man and nature gone,
Who sing ' O easy yoke of Christ !'
But find 'tis hard to get it on ;
Not great men, even when they're good ;
The good man whom the time makes great,
By some disgrace of chance or blood,
God fails not to humiliate ;
Not these : but souls, found here and there,
Oases in our waste of sin,
Where everything is well and fair,
And Heav'n remits its discipline ;
Whose sweet subdual of the world
The worldling scarce can recognise,
And ridicule, against it hurl'd,
Drops with a broken sting and dies ;
Who nobly, if they cannot know
Whether a 'scutcheon's dubious field
Carries a falcon or a crow,
Fancy a falcon on the shield ;
Yet, ever careful not to hurt
God's honour, who creates success,
Their praise of even the best desert
Is but to have presumed no less ;

Who, should their own life plaudits bring,
Are simply vex'd at heart that such
An easy, yea, delightful thing
Should move the minds of men so much.
They live by law, not like the fool,
But like the bard, who freely sings
In strictest bonds of rhyme and rule,
And finds in them, not bonds, but wings.
Postponing still their private ease
To courtly custom, appetite,
Subjected to observances,
To banquet goes with full delight ;
Nay, continence and gratitude
So cleanse their lives from earth's alloy,
They taste, in Nature's common food,
Nothing but spiritual joy.
They shine like Moses in the face,
And teach our hearts, without the rod,
That God's grace is the only grace,
And all grace is the grace of God.

II

The Devices

Love, kiss'd by Wisdom, wakes twice Love,
And Wisdom is, thro' loving, wise.
Let Dove and Snake, and Snake and Dove,
This Wisdom's be, that Love's device.

GOING TO CHURCH

I

I woke at three ; for I was bid

To breakfast with the Dean at nine,
And thence to Church. My curtain slid,

I found the dawning Sunday fine ;
And could not rest, so rose. The air

Was dark and sharp ; the roosted birds
Cheep'd, ' Here am I, Sweet ; are you there ? '

On Avon's misty flats the herds
Expected, comfortless, the day,

Which slowly fired the clouds above ;
The cock scream'd somewhere far away ;

In sleep the matrimonial dove
Was crooning ; no wind waked the wood,

Nor moved the midnight river-damps,
Nor thrill'd the poplar ; quiet stood

The chestnut with its thousand lamps ;
The moon shone yet, but weak and drear,
And seem'd to watch, with bated breath,

The landscape, all made sharp and clear
By stillness, as a face by death.

2

My pray'rs for her being done, I took

Occasion by the quiet hour

To find and know, by Rule and Book,

The rights of love's beloved power.

3

Fronting the question without ruth,
Nor ignorant that, evermore,
If men will stoop to kiss the Truth,
She lifts them higher than before,
I, from above, such light required
As now should once for all destroy
The folly which at times desired
A sanction for so great a joy.

4

Thenceforth, and through that pray'r, I trod
A path with no suspicions dim.
I loved her in the name of God,
And for the ray she was of Him ;
I ought to admire much more, not less ;
Her beauty was a godly grace ;
The mystery of loveliness,
Which made an altar of her face,
Was not of the flesh, though that was fair,
But a most pure and living light
Without a name, by which the rare
And virtuous spirit flamed to sight.
If oft, in love, effect lack'd cause
And cause effect, 'twere vain to soar
Reasons to seek for that which was
Reason itself, or something more.
My joy was no idolatry
Upon the ends of the vile earth bent,
For when I loved her most then I
Most yearn'd for more divine content.

That other doubt, which, like a ghost,
In the brain's darkness haunted me,
Was thus resolved : Him loved I most,
But her I loved most sensibly.
Lastly, my giddiest hope allow'd
No selfish thought, or earthly smirch ;
And forth I went, in peace, and proud
To take my passion into Church ;
Grateful and glad to think that all
Such doubts would seem entirely vain
To her whose nature's lighter fall
Made no divorce of heart from brain.

5

I found them, with exactest grace
And fresh as Spring, for Spring attired ;
And by the radiance in her face
I saw she felt she was admired ;
And, through the common luck of love,
A moment's fortunate delay,
To fit the little lilac glove,
Gave me her arm ; and I and they
(They true to this and every hour,
As if attended on by Time),
Entered the Church while yet the tower
Was noisy with the finish'd chime.

6

Her soft voice, singularly heard
Beside me, in her chant, withstood
The roar of voices, like a bird
Sole warbling in a windy wood ;

And, when we knelt, she seem'd to be
 An angel teaching me to pray ;
And all through the high Liturgy
 My spirit rejoiced without allay,
Being, for once, borne clearly above
 All banks and bars of ignorance,
By this bright spring-tide of pure love
 And floated in a free expanse,
Whence it could see from side to side,
 The obscurity from every part
Winnow'd away and purified
 By the vibrations of my heart.

CANTO XI

The Dance

PRELUDES

I

The Daughter of Eve

THE woman's gentle mood o'erstept
Withers my love, that lightly scans
The rest, and does in her accept
All her own faults, but none of man's.
As man I cannot judge her ill,
Or honour her fair station less,
Who, with a woman's errors, still
Preserves a woman's gentleness ;
For thus I think, if one I see
Who disappoints my high desire,
'How admirable would she be,
'Could she but know how I admire !'
Or fail she, though from blemish clear,
To charm, I call it my defect ;
And so my thought, with reverent fear
To err by doltish disrespect,
Inputes love's great regard, and says,
Though unapparent 'tis to me,
Be sure this Queen some other sways
With well-perceiv'd supremacy.'

Behold the worst ! Light from above
On the blank ruin writes 'Forbear !
'Her first crime was unguarded love,
'And all the rest, perhaps, despair.'
Discrown'd, dejected, but not lost,
O, sad one, with no more a name
Or place in all the honour'd host
Of maiden and of matron fame,
Grieve on ; but, if thou grieve'st right,
'Tis not that these abhor thy state,
Nor would'st thou lower the least the height
Which makes thy casting down so great.
Good is thy lot in its degree ;
For hearts that verily repent
Are burden'd with impunity
And comforted by chastisement.
Sweet patience sanctify thy woes !
And doubt not but our God is just,
Albeit unscathed thy traitor goes,
And thou art stricken to the dust.
That penalty's the best to bear
Which follows soonest on the sin ;
And guilt's a game where losers fare
Better than those who seem to win.

II

Aurea Dicta

'Tis truth (although this truth's a star
Too deep-enski'd for all to see),
As poets of grammar, lovers are
The fountains of morality.

Child, would you shun the vulgar doom,
In love disgust, in death despair?
Know, death must come and love must come,
And so for each your soul prepare.

Who pleasure follows pleasure slays;
God's wrath upon himself he wreaks;
But all delights rejoice his days
Who takes with thanks, and never seeks.

The wrong is made and measured by
The right's inverted dignity.
Change love to shame, as love is high
So low in hell your bed shall be.

How easy to keep free from sin!
How hard that freedom to recall!
For dreadful truth it is that men
Forget the heavens from which they fall.

Lest sacred love your soul ensnare,
With pious fancy still infer
'How loving and how lovely fair
'Must He be who has fashion'd her!'

Become whatever good you see,
Nor sigh if, forthwith, fades from view
The grace of which you may not be
The subject and spectator too.

Love's perfect blossom only blows
Where noble manners veil defect.
Angels may be familiar; those
Who err each other must respect.

Love blabb'd of is a great decline ;
A careless word unsanctions sense ;
But he who casts Heaven's truth to swine
Consummates all incontinence.

Not to unveil before the gaze
Of an imperfect sympathy
In aught we are, is the sweet praise
And the main sum of modesty.

THE DANCE

I

‘My memory of Heaven awakes !
‘She’s not of the earth, although her light,
‘As lantern’d by her body, makes
‘A piece of it past bearing bright.
‘So innocently proud and fair
‘She is. that Wisdom sings for glee
‘And Folly dies, breathing one air
‘With such a bright-cheek’d chastity ;
‘And though her charms are a strong law
‘Compelling all men to admire,
‘They go so clad with lovely awe
‘None but the noble dares desire.
‘He who would seek to make her his
‘Will comprehend that souls of grace
‘Own sweet repulsion, and that ’tis
‘The quality of their embrace
‘To be like the majestic reach
‘Of coupled suns, that, from afar,
‘Mingle their mutual spheres, while each
‘Circles the twin obsequious star ;
‘And, in the warmth of hand to hand,
‘Of heart to heart, he’ll vow to note
‘And reverently understand
‘How the two spirits shine remote ;

'And ne'er to numb fine honour's nerve,
'Nor let sweet awe in passion melt,
'Nor fail by courtesies to observe
'The space which makes attraction felt;
'Nor cease to guard like life the sense
'Which tells him that the embrace of love
'Is o'er a gulf of difference
'Love cannot sound, nor death remove.'

2

This learn'd I, watching where she danced,
Native to melody and light,
And now and then toward me glanced,
Pleased, as I hoped, to please my sight.

3

Ah, love to speak was impotent,
Till music did a tongue confer,
And I ne'er knew what music meant,
Until I danced to it with her.
Too proud of the sustaining power
Of my, till then, unblemish'd joy,
My passion, for reproof, that hour
Tasted mortality's alloy,
And bore me down an eddyng gulf;
I wish'd the world might run to wreck,
So I but once might fling myself
Obliviously about her neck.
I press'd her hand, by will or chance
I know not, but I saw the rays

Withdrawn, which did till then enhance
Her fairness with its thanks for praise.
I knew my spirit's vague offence
Was patent to the dreaming eye
And heavenly tact of innocence,
And did for fear my fear defy,
And ask'd her for the next dance. 'Yes.'
'No' had not fall'n with half the force.
She was fulfill'd with gentleness,
And I with measureless remorse ;
And, ere I slept, on bended knee
I own'd myself, with many a tear,
Unseasonable, disorderly,
And a deranger of love's sphere ;
Gave thanks that, when we stumble and fall,
We hurt ourselves, and not the truth ;
And, rising, found its brightness all
The brighter through the tears of ruth.

4

Nor was my hope that night made less,
Though order'd, humbled, and reproved ;
Her farewell did her heart express
As much, but not with anger, moved.
My trouble had my soul betray'd ;
And, in the night of my despair,
My love, a flower of noon afraid,
Divulged its fulness unaware.
I saw she saw ; and, O sweet Heaven,
Could my glad mind have credited

That influence had to me been given
To affect her so, I should have said
That, though she from herself conceal'd
Love's felt delight and fancied harm,
They made her face the jousting field
Of joy and beautiful alarm.

CANTO XII

The Abdication

PRELUDES

I

The Chace

SHE wearies with an ill unknown ;
In sleep she sobs and seems to float,
A water-lily, all alone
Within a lonely castle-moat ;
And as the full-moon, spectral, lies
Within the crescent's gleaming arms,
The present shows her heedless eyes
A future dim with vague alarms.
She sees, and yet she scarcely sees,
For, life-in-life not yet begun,
Too many are its mysteries
For thought to fix on any one.
She's told that maidens are by youths
Extremely honour'd and desired ;
And sighs, ' If those sweet tales be truths,
' What bliss to be so much admired ! '
The suitors come ; she sees them grieve ;
Her coldness fills them with despair ;
She'd pity if she could believe ;
She's sorry that she cannot care.

But who now meets her on her way?
Comes he as enemy or friend,
Or both? Her bosom seems to say,
He cannot pass, and there an end.
Whom does he love? Does he confer
His heart on worth that answers his?
Or is he come to worship her?
She fears, she hopes, she thinks he is!
Advancing stepless, quick, and still,
As in the grass a serpent glides,
He fascinates her fluttering will,
Then terrifies with dreadful strides.
At first, there's nothing to resist;
He fights with all the forms of peace;
He comes about her like a mist,
With subtle, swift, unseen increase;
And then, unlook'd for, strikes amain
Some stroke that frightens her to death,
And grows all harmlessness again,
Ere she can cry, or get her breath.
At times she stops, and stands at bay;
But he, in all more strong than she,
Subdues her with his pale dismay,
Or more admired audacity.
She plans some final, fatal blow,
But when she means with frowns to kill
He looks as if he loved her so,
She smiles to him against her will.
How sweetly he implies her praise!
His tender talk, his gentle tone,
The manly worship in his gaze,
They nearly make her heart his own.

With what an air' he speaks her name ;
His manner always recollects
Her sex, and still the woman's claim
Is taught its scope by his respects.
Her charms, perceived to prosper first
In his beloved advertencies,
When in her glass they are rehearsed,
Prove his most powerful allies.
Ah, whither shall a maiden flee,
When a bold youth so swift pursues,
And siege of tenderest courtesy,
With hope perseverant, still renews
Why fly so fast? Her flatter'd breast
Thanks him who finds her fair and good
She loves her fears ; veil'd joys arrest
The foolish terrors of her blood.
By secret, sweet degrees, her heart,
Vanquish'd, takes warmth from his desire ;
She makes it more, with hidden art,
And fuels love's late dreaded fire.
The generous credit he accords
To all the signs of good in her
Redeems itself ; his praiseful words
The virtues they impute confer.
Her heart is thrice as rich in bliss,
She's three times gentler than before ;
He gains a right to call her his
Now she through him is so much more ;
'Tis heaven where'er she turns her head ;
'Tis music when she talks ; 'tis air
On which, elate, she seems to tread,
The convert of a gladder sphere !

Ah, might he, when by doubts aggrieved,
Behold his tokens next her breast,
At all his words and sighs perceived
Against its blythe upheaval press'd !
But still she flies. Should she be won,
It must not be believed or thought
She yields ; she's chased to death, undone,
Surprised, and violently caught.

II

Denied

The storm-cloud, whose portentous shade
Fumes from a core of smother'd fire,
His livery is whose worshipp'd maid
Denies herself to his desire.
Ah, grief that almost crushes life,
To lie upon his lonely bed,
And fancy her another's wife !
His brain is flame, his heart is lead.
Sinking at last, by nature's course,
Cloak'd round with sleep from his despair,
He does but sleep to gather force
That goes to his exhausted care.
He wakes renew'd for all the smart.
His only Love, and she is wed !
His fondness comes about his heart,
As milk comes when the babe is dead.
The wretch, whom she found fit for scorn,
His own allegiant thoughts despise ;
And far into the shining morn
Lazy with misery he lies.

III

The Churl

This marks the Churl : when spousals crown
His selfish hope, he finds the grace,
Which sweet love has for even the clown,
Was not in the woman, but the chace.

THE ABDICATION

I

From little signs, like little stars,
Whose faint impression on the sense
The very looking straight at mars,
Or only seen by confluence ;
From instinct of a mutual thought,
Whence sanctity of manners flow'd ;
From chance unconscious, and from what
Concealment, overconscious, show'd ;
Her hand's less weight upon my arm,
Her lowlier mien ; that match'd with this ;
I found, and felt with strange alarm,
I stood committed to my bliss.

2

I grew assured, before I ask'd,
That she'd be mine without reserve,
And in her unclaim'd graces bask'd,
At leisure, till the time should serve,
With just enough of dread to thrill
The hope, and make it trebly dear ;
Thus loth to speak the word to kill
Either the hope or happy fear.

3

Till once, through lanes returning late,
Her laughing sisters lagg'd behind ;
And, ere we reach'd her father's gate,
We paused with one presentient mind ;
And, in the dim and perfumed mist,
Their coming stay'd, who, friends to me,
And very women, loved to assist
Love's timid opportunity.

4

Twice rose, twice died my trembling word ;
The faint and frail Cathedral chimes
Spake time in music, and we heard
The chafers rustling in the limes.
Her dress, that touch'd me where I stood,
The warmth of her confided arm,
Her bosom's gentle neighbourhood,
Her pleasure in her power to charm ;
Her look, her love, her form, her touch,
The least seem'd most by blissful turn,
Blissful but that it pleased too much,
And taught the wayward soul to yearn.
It was as if a harp with wires
Was traversed by the breath I drew ;
And, oh, sweet meeting of desires,
She, answering, own'd that she loved too.

5

Honoria was to be my bride !

The hopeless heights of hope were scaled ;

The summit won, I paused and sigh'd,

As if success itself had fail'd.

It seem'd as if my lips approach'd

To touch at Tantalus' reward,

And rashly on Eden life encroach'd,

Half-blinded by the flaming sword.

The whole world's wealthiest and its best,

So fiercely sought, appear'd, when found,

Poor in its need to be possess'd,

Poor from its very want of bound.

My queen was crouching at my side,

By love unsceptred and brought low,

Her awful garb of maiden pride

All melted into tears like snow ;

The mistress of my reverent thought,

Whose praise was all I ask'd of fame,

In my close-watch'd approval sought

Protection as from danger and blame ;

Her soul, which late I loved to invest

With pity for my poor desert,

Buried its face within my breast,

Like a pet fawn by hunters hurt.

BOOK II

THE PROLOGUE

I

HER sons pursue the butterflies,
Her baby daughter mocks the doves
With throbbing coo ; in his fond eyes
She's Venus with her little Loves ;
Her footfall dignifies the earth,
Her form's the native-land of grace,
And, lo, his coming lights with mirth
Its court and capital her face !
Full proud her favour makes her lord,
And that her flatter'd bosom knows.
She takes his arm without a word,
In lanes of laurel and of rose.
Ten years to-day has she been his.
He but begins to understand,
He says, the dignity and bliss
She gave him when she gave her hand.
She, answering, says, he disenchant's
The past, though that was perfect ; he
Rejoins, the present nothing wants
But briefness to be ecstasy.

He lauds her charms ; her beauty's glow
Wins from the spoiler Time new rays ;
Bright looks reply, approving so
Beauty's elixir vitæ, praise.
Upon a beech he bids her mark
Where, ten years since, he carved her name ;
It grows there with the growing bark,
And in his heart it grows the same.
For that her soft arm presses his
Close to her fond, maternal breast ;
He tells her, each new kindness is
The effectual sum of all the rest !
And, whilst the cushat, mocking, coo'd,
They blest the days they had been wed,
At cost of those in which he woo'd,
Till everything was three times said ;
And words were growing vain, when Briggs,
Factotum, Footman, Butler, Groom,
Who press'd the cyder, fed the pigs,
Preserv'd the rabbits, drove the brougham,
And help'd, at need, to mow the lawns,
And sweep the paths and thatch the hay,
Here brought the Post down, Mrs. Vaughan's
Sole rival, but, for once, to-day,
Scarce look'd at ; for the 'Second Book',
Till this tenth festival kept close,
Was thus commenced, while o'er them shook
The laurel married with the rose.

2

‘The pulse of War, whose bloody heats
‘Sane purposes insanely work,
‘Now with fraternal frenzy beats,
‘And binds the Christian to the Turk,
‘And shrieking fifes’——

3

But, with a roar,
In rush’d the Loves ; the tallest roll’d
A hedgehog from his pinafore,
Which saved his fingers ; Baby, bold,
Touch’d it, and stared, and scream’d for life,
And stretch’d her hand for Vaughan to kiss,
Who hugg’d his Pet, and ask’d his wife,
‘Is this for love, or love for this ?’
But she turn’d pale, for, lo, the beast,
Found stock-still in the rabbit-trap,
And feigning so to be deceased,
And laid by Frank upon her lap,
Unglobed himself, and show’d his snout,
And fell, scatt’ring the Loves amain,
With shriek, with laughter, and with shout ;
And, peace at last restored again,
The Bard, who this untimely hitch
Bore with a calm magnanimous,
(The hedgehog roll’d into a ditch,
And Venus sooth’d), proceeded thus :

CANTO I

Accepted

PRELUDES

I

The Song of Songs

THE pulse of War, whose bloody heats
Sane purposes insanely work,
Now with fraternal frenzy beats,
And binds the Christian to the Turk,
And shrieking fifes and braggart flags,
Through quiet England, teach our breath
The courage corporate that drags
The coward to heroic death.
Too late for song ! Who henceforth sings,
Must fledge his heavenly flight with more
Song-worthy and heroic things
Than hasty, home-destroying war.
While might and right are not agrced,
And battle thus is yet to wage,
So long let laurels be the meed
Of soldier as of poet sage ;
But men expect the Tale of Love,
And weary of the Tale of Hate,
Lift me, O Muse, myself above,
And let the world no longer wait !

II

The Kites

I saw three Cupids (so I dream'd),
Who made three kites, on which were drawn,
In letters that like roses gleam'd,
 'Plato', 'Anacreon', and 'Vaughan.'
The boy who held by Plato tried
 His airy venture first ; all sail,
It heav'nward rush'd till scarce descried,
 Then pitch'd and dropp'd, for want of tail.
Anacreon's Love, with shouts of mirth
 That pride of spirit thus should fall,
To his kite link'd a lump of earth,
 And, lo, it would not soar at all.
Last, my disciple freighted his
 With a long streamer made of flowers,
The children of the sod, and this
 Rose in the sun, and flew for hours.

III

Orpheus

The music of the Sirens found
Ulysses weak, though cords were strong ;
But happier Orpheus stood unbound,
 And shamed it with a sweeter song.
His mode be mine. Of Heav'n I ask,
 May I, with heart-persuading might,
Pursue the Poet's sacred task
 Of superseding faith by sight,

Till ev'n the witless Gadarene,
 Preferring Christ to swine, shall know
 That life is sweetest when it's clean.
 To prouder folly let me show
 Earth by divine light made divine ;
 And let the saints, who hear my word,
 Say, ' Lo, the clouds begin to shine
 ' About the coming of the Lord !'

IV

Nearest the Dearest

Till Eve was brought to Adam, he
 A solitary desert trod,
 Though in the great society
 Of nature, angels, and of God.
 If one slight column counterweighs
 The ocean, 'tis the Maker's law,
 Who deems obedience better praise
 Than sacrifice of erring awe.

V

Perspective

What seems to us for us is true.
 The planet has no proper light,
 And yet, when Venus is in view,
 No primal star is half so bright.

ACCEPTED

I

What fortune did my heart foretell?
What shook my spirit, as I woke,
Like the vibration of a bell
Of which I had not heard the stroke?
Was it some happy vision shut
From memory by the sun's fresh ray?
Was it that linnet's song ; or but
A natural gratitude for day?
Or the mere joy the senses weave,
A wayward ecstasy of life?
Then I remember'd, yester-eve
I won Honoria for my Wife.

2

Forth riding, while as yet the day
Was dewy, watching Sarum Spire,
Still beckoning me along my way,
And growing every minute higher,
I reach'd the Dean's. One blind was down,
Though nine then struck. My bride to be !
And had she rested ill, my own,
With thinking (oh, my heart !) of me?

I paced the streets ; a pistol chose,
To guard my now important life
When riding late from Sarum Close ;
At noon return'd. Good Mrs. Fife,
To my, 'The Dean, is he at home ?'
Said, 'No, Sir ; but Miss Honor is' ;
And straight, not asking if I'd come,
Announced me, 'Mr. Felix, Miss',
To Mildred, in the Study. There
We talk'd, she working. We agreed
The day was fine ; the Fancy-Fair
Successful ; 'Did I ever read
'De Genlis?' 'Never.' 'Do ! She heard
'I was engaged.' 'To whom?' 'Miss Fry.'
'Was it the fact?' 'No !' 'On my word ?'
'What scandal people talk'd !' 'Would I
'Hold out this skein of silk?' So pass'd
I knew not how much time away.
'How were her sisters?' 'Well.' At last
I summon'd heart enough to say,
'I hoped to see Miss Churchill too.'
'Miss Churchill, Felix ! What is this ?'
'I said, and now I find 'tis true,
'Last night you quarrell'd ! Here she is.'

3

She came, and seem'd a morning rose
When ruffling rain has paled its blush ;
Her crown once more was on her brows ;
And, with a faint, indignant flush,

And fainter smile, she gave her hand,

But not her eyes, then sate apart,

As if to make me understand

The honour of her vanquish'd heart.

But I drew humbly to her side ;

And she, well pleased, perceiving me

Liege ever to the noble pride

Of her unconquer'd majesty,

Once and for all put it away ;

The faint flush pass'd ; and, thereupon,

Her loveliness, which rather lay

In light than colour, smiled and shone,

Till sick was all my soul with bliss ;

Or was it with remorse and ire

Of such a sanctity as this

Subdued by love to my desire?

CANTO II

The Course of True Love

PRELUDES

I

The Changed Allegiance

WATCH how a bird, that captived sings,
The cage set open, first looks out,
Yet fears the freedom of his wings,
And now withdraws, and flits about,
And now looks forth again ; until,
Grown bold, he hops on stool and chair,
And now attains the window-sill,
And now confides himself to air.
The maiden so, from love's free sky
In chaste and prudent counsels caged,
But longing to be loosen'd by
Her suitor's faith declared and gaged,
When blest with that release desired,
First doubts if truly she is free,
Then pauses, restlessly retired,
Alarm'd at too much liberty ;
But soon, remembering all her debt
To plighted passion, gets by rote
Her duty ; says, ' I love him ! ' yet
The thought half chokes her in her throat ;

And, like that fatal 'I am thine',
Comes with alternate gush and check
And joltings of the heart, as wine
Pour'd from a flask of narrow neck.
Is he indeed her choice? She fears
Her Yes was rashly said, and shame,
Remorse, and ineffectual tears
Revolt from his conceded claim.
Oh, treason! So, with desperate nerve,
She cries, 'I am in love, am his';
Lest run the cables of reserve,
And floats into a sea of bliss,
And laughs to think of her alarm,
Avows she was in love before,
Though his avowal was the charm
Which open'd to her own the door.
She loves him for his mastering air,
Whence, Parthian-like, she slaying flies;
His flattering look, which seems to wear
Her loveliness in manly eyes;
His smile, which, by reverse, portends
An awful wrath, should reason stir;
(How fortunate it is they're friends,
And he will ne'er be wroth with her!)
His power to do or guard from harm;
If he but chose to use it half,
And catch her up in one strong arm,
What could she do but weep, or laugh!
His words, which still instruct, but so
That this applause seems still implied,
'How wise in all she ought to know,
'How ignorant of all beside!'

His skilful suit, which leaves her free,
Gives nothing for the world to name,
And keeps her conscience safe, while he,
With half the bliss, takes all the blame ;
His clear repute with great and small ;
The jealousy his choice will stir ;
But, ten times more than ten times all,
She loves him for his love of her.
How happy 'tis he seems to see
In her that utter loveliness
Which she, for his sake, longs to be !
At times, she cannot but confess
Her other friends are somewhat blind ;
Her parents' years excuse neglect,
But all the rest are scarcely kind,
And brothers grossly want respect ;
And oft she views what he admires
Within her glass, and sight of this
Makes all the sum of her desires
To be devotion unto his.
But still, at first, whatever's done,
A touch, her hand press'd lightly, she
Stands dizzied, shock'd, and flush'd, like one
Set sudden neck-deep in the sea ;
And, though her bond for endless time
To his good pleasure gives her o'er,
The slightest favour seems a crime,
Because it makes her love him more.
But that she ne'er will let him know ;
For what were love should reverence cease ?
A thought which makes her reason so
Inscrutable, it seems caprice.

With her, as with a desperate town,
Too weak to stand, too proud to reat,
The conqueror, though the walls are down,
Has still to capture street by street ;
But, after that, habitual faith,
Divorced from self, where late 'twas due,
Walks nobly in its novel path,
And she's to changed allegiance true ;
And prizing what she can't prevent,
(Right wisdom, often misdeem'd whim),
Her will's indomitably bent
On mere submissiveness to him ;
To him she'll cleave, for him forsake
Father's and mother's fond command !
He is her lord, for he can take
Hold of her faint heart with his hand.

II

Beauty

'Beauty deludes.' O shaft well shot,
To strike the mark's true opposite !
That ugly good is scorn'd proves not
'Tis beauty lies, but lack of it.
By Heaven's law the Jew might take
A slave to wife, if she was fair ;
So strong a plea does beauty make
That, where 'tis seen, discretion's there.
If, by a monstrous chance, we learn
That this illustrious vault's a lie,
Our minds, by which the eyes discern,
See hideous contrariety,

And laugh at Nature's wanton mood,
Which, thus a swinish thing to flout,
Though haply in its gross way good,
Hangs such a jewel in its snout.

III

Lais and Lucretia

Did first his beauty wake her sighs?
That's Lais ! Thus Lucretia's known :
The beauty in her Lover's eyes
Was admiration of her own.

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE

I

Oh, beating heart of sweet alarm,
Which stays the lover's step, when near
His mistress and her awful charm
Of grace and innocence sincere !
I held the half-shut door, and heard
The voice of my betrothed wife,
Who sang my verses, every word
By music taught its latent life ;
With interludes of well-touch'd notes,
That flash'd, surprising and serene,
As meteor after meteor floats
The soft, autumnal stars between.
There was a passion in her tone,
A tremor when she touch'd the keys,
Which told me she was there alone,
And uttering all her soul at ease.
I enter'd ; for I did not choose
To learn how in her heart I throve,
By chance or stealth ; beyond her use,
Her greeting flatter'd me with love.

2

With true love's treacherous confidence,
And ire, at last to laughter won,
She spoke this speech, and mark'd its sense,
By action, as her Aunt had done.

3

- “ You, with your looks and catching air,
“ To think of Vaughan ! You fool ! You know,
“ You might, with ordinary care,
“ Ev’n yet be Lady Clitheroe.
“ You’re sure he’ll do great things some day !
“ Nonsense, he won’t ; he’s dress’d too well.
“ Dines with the Sterling Club, they say ;
“ Not commonly respectable !
“ Half Puritan, half Cavalier !
“ His curly hair I think’s a wig ;
“ And, for his fortune, why, my Dear,
“ ‘Tis not enough to keep a gig.
“ Rich Aunts and Uncles never die ;
“ And what you bring won’t do for dress ;
“ And so you’ll live on Bye-and-bye,
“ “With oaten-cake and water-cress !”

4

- ‘ I cried, but did not let her see.
‘ At last she soften’d her dispraise,
‘ On learning you had bought for me
‘ A carriage and a pair of bays.
‘ But here she comes ! You take her in
‘ To dinner. I impose this task :
‘ Make her approve my love ; and win
‘ What thanks from me you choose to ask !’

5

'My niece has told you every word
 'I said of you ! What may I mean ?
 'Of course she has ; but you've not heard
 'How I abused you to the Dean :—
 'Yes, I'll take wine ; he's mad, like her ;
 'And she *will* have you : there it ends !
 'And, now I've done my duty, Sir,
 'And you've shown common-sense, we're
 friends !'

6

'Go, Child, and see him out yourself,'
 Aunt Maude said, after tea, 'and show
 'The place, upon that upper shelf,
 'Where Petrarch stands, lent long ago.'

7

'These rose-leaves to my heart be press'd,
 'Honor, while it aches for you !'
 (The rose in ruin, from her breast,
 Fell, as I took a fond adieu.)
 'You must go now, Love !' 'See, the air
 'Is thick with starlight !' 'Let me tie
 'This scarf on. Oh, your Petrarch ! There !
 'I'm coming, Aunt !' 'Sweet, Sweet !'
 'Good-bye !'
 'Ah, Love, to me 'tis death to part,
 'Yet you, my sever'd life, smile on !'
 'These "Good-nights," Felix, break my heart ;
 'I'm only gay till you are gone !'

With love's bright arrows from her eyes,
And balm on her permissive lips,
She pass'd, and night was a surprise,
As when the sun at Quito dips.
Her beauties were like sunlit snows,
Flush'd but not warm'd with my desire.
Oh, how I loved her ! Fiercely glows
In the pure air of frost the fire.
Who for a year is sure of fate !
I thought, dishearten'd, as I went,
Wroth with the Dean, who bade me wait,
And vex'd with her, who seem'd content.
Nay, could eternal life afford
That tyranny should thus deduct
From this fair land, which call'd me lord,
A year of the sweet usufruct ?
It might not and it should not be !
I'd go back now, and he must own,
At once, my love's compulsive plea.
I turn'd, I found the Dean alone.
'Nonsense, my friend ; go back to bed !
'It's half-past twelve !' 'July, then, Sir ?'
'Well, come to-morrow,' at last he said,
'And you may talk of it with her.'
A light gleam'd as I pass'd the stair.
A pausing foot, a flash of dress,
And a sweet voice. 'Is Felix there ?'
'July, Love !' 'Says Papa so ?' 'Yes !'

CANTO III
The County Ball

PRELUDES

I

Love Ceremonious

KEEP your undrest, familiar style
For strangers, but respect your friend,
Her most, whose matrimonial smile
Is and asks honour without end.
'Tis found, and needs it must so be,
That life from love's allegiance flags,
When love forgets his majesty
In sloth's unceremonious rags.
Let love make home a gracious Court ;
There let the world's rude, hasty ways
Be fashion'd to a loftier port,
And learn to bow and stand at gaze ;
And let the sweet respective sphere
Of personal worship there obtain
Circumference for moving clear
None treading on another's train.
This makes that pleasures do not cloy,
And dignifies our mortal strife
With calmness and considerate joy,
Befitting our immortal life.

II

The Rainbow

A stately rainbow came and stood,
 When I was young, in High-Hurst Park ;
 Its bright feet lit the hill and wood
 Beyond, and cloud and sward were dark ;
 And I, who thought the splendour ours
 Because the place was, t'wards it flew,
 And there, amidst the glittering showers,
 Gazed vainly for the glorious view.
 With whatsoever's lovely, know
 It is not ours ; stand off to see,
 Or beauty's apparition so
 Puts on invisibility.

III

A Paradox

To tryst Love blindfold goes, for fear
 He should not see, and eyeless night
 He chooses still for breathing near
 Beauty, that lives but in the sight.

THE COUNTY BALL

I

Well, Heaven be thank'd my first-love fail'd,
As, Heaven be thank'd, our first-loves do !
Thought I, when Fanny past me sail'd,
Loved once, for what I never knew,
Unless for colouring in her talk,
When cheeks and merry mouth would show
Three roses on a single stalk,
The middle wanting room to blow,
And forward ways, that charm'd the boy
Whose love-sick mind, misreading fate,
Scarce hoped that any Queen of Joy
Could ever stoop to be his mate.

2

But there danced she, who from the leaven
Of ill preserv'd my heart and wit
All unawares, for she was heaven,
Others at best but fit for it.
One of those lovely things she was
In whose least action there can be
Nothing so transient but it has
An air of immortality.

I mark'd her step, with peace elate,
Her brow more beautiful than morn,
Her sometime look of girlish state
Which sweetly waived its right to scorn ;
The giddy crowd, she grave the while,
Although, as 'twere beyond her will,
Around her mouth the baby smile,
That she was born with, linger'd still.
Her ball-dress seem'd a breathing mist,
From the fair form exhaled and shed,
Raised in the dance with arm and wrist
All warmth and light, unbraceleted.
Her motion, feeling 'twas beloved,
The pensive soul of tune express'd,
And, oh, what perfume, as she moved,
Came from the flowers in her breast !
How sweet a tongue the music had
'Beautiful Girl', it seem'd to say,
'Though all the world were vile and sad,
'Dance on ; let innocence be gay.'
Ah, none but I discern'd her looks,
When in the throng she pass'd me by,
For love is like a ghost, and brooks
Only the chosen seer's eye ;
And who but she could e'er divine
The halo and the happy trance
When her right arm repos'd on mine,
In all the pauses of the dance

3

Whilst so her beauty fed my sight,
And whilst I lived in what she said,
Accordant airs, like all delight
Most sweet when noted least, were play'd ;
And was it like the Pharisee
If I in secret bow'd my face
With joyful thanks that I should be,
Not as many were, but with grace,
And fortune of well-nurtured youth,
And days no sordid pains defile,
And thoughts accustom'd to the truth,
Made capable of her fair smile ?

4

Charles Barton follow'd down the stair,
To talk with me about the Ball,
And carp at all the people there.
The Churchills chiefly stirr'd his gall :
'Such were the Kriemhilds and Isondes
'You storm'd about at Trinity !
'Nothing at heart but handsome Blondes !
'Folk say that you and Fanny Fry—'
'They err ! Good-night ! Here lies my course,
'Through Wilton.' Silence blest my ears,
And, weak at heart with vague remorse,
A passing poignancy of tears
Attack'd mine eyes. By pale and park
I rode, and ever seem'd to see,
In the transparent starry dark,
That splendid brow of chastity,

That soft and yet subduing light,
At which, as at the sudden moon,
I held my breath, and thought 'how bright !'
That guileless beauty in its noon,
Compelling tribute of desires
Ardent as day when Sirius reigns,
Pure as the permeating fires
That smoulder in the opal's veins.

CANTO IV
Tobe in Idleness

PRELUDES

I

Honour and Desert

O QUEEN, awake to thy renown,
Require what 'tis our wealth to give,
And comprehend and wear the crown
Of thy despised prerogative !
I, who in manhood's name at length
With glad songs come to abdicate
The gross regality of strength,
Must yet in this thy praise abate,
That, through thine erring humbleness
And disregard of thy degree,
Mainly, has man been so much less
Than fits his fellowship with thee.
High thoughts had shaped the foolish brow,
The coward had grasp'd the hero's sword,
The vilest had been great, hadst thou,
Just to thyself, been worth's reward.
But lofty honours undersold
Seller and buyer both disgrace ;
And favours that make folly bold
Banish the light from virtue's face.

II

Love and Honour

What man with baseness so content,
Or sick with false conceit of right,
As not to know that the element
And inmost warmth of love's delight
Is honour? Who'd not rather kiss
A duchess than a milkmaid, prank
The two in equal grace, which is
Precedent Nature's obvious rank?
Much rather, then, a woman deck'd
With saintly honours, chaste and good,
Whose thoughts celestial things affect,
Whose eyes express her heavenly mood!
Those lesser vaunts are dimm'd or lost
Which plume her name or paint her lip,
Extinct in the deep-glowing boast
Of her angelic fellowship.

III

Valour misdirected

'I'll hunt for dangers North and South,
'To prove my love, which sloth maligns!'
What seems to say her rosy mouth?
'I'm not convinced by proofs but signs.'

LOVE IN IDLENESS

I

What should I do? In such a wife
Fortune had lavish'd all her store,
And nothing now seem'd left for life
But to deserve her more and more.
To this I vow'd my life's whole scope;
And Love said, 'I forewarn you now,
'The Maiden will fulfil your hope
'Only as you fulfil your vow.'

2

A promised service, (task for days),
Was done this morning while she slept,
With that full heart which thinks no praise
Of vows which are not more than kept;
But loftier work did love impose,
And studious hours. Alas, for these,
While she from all my thoughts arose
Like Venus from the restless seas!

3

I conn'd a scheme, with mind elate:
My Uncle's land would fall to me,
My skill was much in school debate,
My friends were strong in Salisbury;

A place in Parliament once gain'd,
 Thro' saps first labour'd out of sight,
 Far loftier peaks were then attain'd
 With easy leaps from height to height ;
 And that o'erwhelming honour paid,
 Or recognised, at least, in life,
 Which this most sweet and noble Maid
 Should yield to him who call'd her Wife.

4

I fix'd this rule : in Sarum Close
 To make two visits every week,
 The first to-day ; and, save on those,
 I nought would do, think, read, or speak,
 Which did not help my settled will
 To earn the Statesman's proud applause.
 And now, forthwith, to mend my skill
 In ethics, politics, and laws,
 The Statesman's learning ! Flush'd with power
 And pride of freshly-form'd resolve,
 I read Helvetius half-an-hour ;
 But, halting in attempts to solve
 Why, more than all things else that be,
 A lady's grace hath force to move
 That sensitive appetency
 Of intellectual good, call'd love,
 Took Blackstone down, only to draw
 My swift-deriving thoughts ere long
 To love, which is the source of law,
 And, like a king, can do no wrong ;

Then open'd Hyde, where loyal hearts,
With faith unpropp'd by precedent,
Began to play rebellious parts.
O, mighty stir that little meant !
How dull the crude, plough'd fields of fact
To me who trod the Elysian grove !
How idle all heroic act
By the least suffering of love !
I could not read ; so took my pen,
And thus commenced, in form of notes,
A Lecture for the Salisbury men,
With due regard to Tory votes :
' A road's a road, though worn to ruts ;
' They speed who travel straight therein ;
' But he who tacks and tries short cuts
' Gets fools' praise and a broken shin—'
And here I stopp'd in sheer despair ;
But, what to-day was thus begun,
I vow'd, up starting from my chair,
To-morrow should indeed be done ;
So loosed my chafing thoughts from school,
To play with fancy as they chose,
And then, according to my rule,
I dress'd and came to Sarum Close.

5

Ah, that sweet laugh ! Diviner sense
Did Nature, forming her, inspire
To omit the grosser elements,
And make her all of air and fire !

6

To-morrow, Cowes' Regatta fell :
The Dean would like his girls to go,
If I went too. 'Most gladly.' Well,
I did but break a foolish vow !
Unless Love's toil has love for prize,
(And then he's Hercules), above
All other contrarities
Is labour contrary to love.
No fault of Love's, but nature's laws !
And Love, in idleness, lies quick ;
For as the worm whose powers make pause,
And swoon, through alteration sick,
The soul, its wingless state dissolved,
Awaits its nuptial life complete,
All indolently self-convolved,
Cocoon'd in silken fancies sweet.

CANTO V

The Queen's Room

PRELUDES

I

Rejected

‘PERHAPS she’s dancing somewhere now !’
The thoughts of light and music wake
Sharp jealousies, that grow and grow
Till silence and the darkness ache.
He sees her step, so proud and gay,
Which, ere he spake, foretold despair ;
Thus did she look, on such a day,
And such the fashion of her hair ;
And thus she stood, when, kneeling low,
He took the bramble from her dress,
And thus she laugh’d and talk’d, whose ‘No’
Was sweeter than another’s ‘Yes.’
He feeds on thoughts that most deject ;
He impudently feigns her charms,
So revered in his own respect,
Dreadfully clasp’d by other arms ;
And turns, and puts his brows, that ache,
Against the pillow where ’tis cold.
If, only now his heart would break !
But, oh, how much a heart can hold.

II

Rachel

You loved her, and would lie all night
Thinking how beautiful she was,
And what to do for her delight.
Now both are bound with alien laws !
Be patient ; put your heart to school ;
Weep if you will, but not despair ;
The trust that nought goes wrong by rule
Should ease this load the many bear.
Love, if there's heav'n, shall meet his dues,
Though here unmatch'd, or match'd amiss ;
Meanwhile, the gentle cannot choose
But learn to love the lips they kiss.
Ne'er hurt the homely sister's ears
With Rachel's beauties ; secret be
The lofty mind whose lonely tears
Protest against mortality.

III

The Heart's Prophecies

Be not amazed at life ; 'tis still
The mode of God with his elect
Their hopes exactly to fulfil,
In times and ways they least expect.

THE QUEEN'S ROOM

I

There's nothing happier than the days
In which young Love makes every thought
Pure as a bride's blush, when she says
 'I will' unto she knows not what ;
And lovers, on the love-lit globe,
 For love's sweet sake, walk yet aloof,
And hear Time weave the marriage-robe,
 Attraction warp and reverence woof !

2

My Housekeeper, my Nurse of yore,
 Cried, as the latest carriage went,
'Well, Mr. Felix, Sir, I'm sure
 'The morning's gone off excellent !
'I never saw the show to pass
 'The ladies, in their fine fresh gowns,
'So sweetly dancing on the grass,
 'To music with its ups and downs.
'We'd such work, Sir, to clean the plate ;
 'Twas just the busy times of old.
'The Queen's room, Sir, look'd quite like state.
 'Miss Smythe, when she went up, made bold

'To peep into the Rose Boudoir,
And cried, "How charming! all quite new";
'And wonder'd who it could be for.
'All but Miss Honor look'd in too.
'But she's too proud to peep and pry.
'None's like that sweet Miss Honor, Sir!
Excuse my humbleness, but I
'Pray Heav'n you'll get a wife like her!
'The Poor love dear Miss Honor's ways
'Better than money. Mrs. Rouse,
'Who ought to know a lady, says
'No finer goes to Wilton House.
'Miss Bagshaw thought that dreary room
'Had kill'd old Mrs. Vaughan with fright;
'She would not sleep in such a tomb
'For all her host was worth a night!
'Miss Fry, Sir, laugh'd; they talk'd the rest
'In French; and French Sir's Greek to me.
'But, though they smiled, and seem'd to jest,
'No love was lost, for I could see
'How serious-like Miss Honor was—'
'Well, Nurse, this is not my affair.
'The ladies talk'd in French with cause.
'Good-day; and thank you for your prayer.'

3

I loiter'd through the vacant house,
Soon to be hers; in one room stay'd,
Of old my mother's. Here my vows
Of endless thanks were oftenest paid.

This room its first condition kept ;
For, on her road to Sarum Town,
Therein an English Queen had slept,
Before the Hurst was half-pull'd down.
The pictured walls the place became :
Here ran the Brook Anaurus, where
Stout Jason bore the wrinkled dame
Whom serving changed to Juno ; there,
Ixion's selfish hope, instead
Of the nuptial goddess, clasp'd a cloud ;
And, here, translated Psyche fed
Her gaze on Love, not disallow'd.

4

And in this chamber had she been,
And into that she would not look,
My Joy, my Vanity, my Queen,
At whose dear name my pulses shook
To others how express at all
My worship in that joyful shrine?
I scarcely can myself recall
What peace and ardour then were mine
And how more sweet than aught below,
The daylight and its duties done,
It felt to fold the hands, and so
Relinquish all regards but one ;
To see her features in the dark ;
To lie and meditate once more
The grace I did not fully mark,
The tone I had not heard before ;

And from my pillow then to take

Her notes, her picture, and her glove,
Put there for joy when I should wake,

And press them to the heart of love;
And then to whisper 'Wife!' and pray

To live so long as not to miss
That unimaginable day

Which farther seems the nearer 'tis;
And still from joy's unfathom'd well

To drink, in dreams, while on her brows
Of innocence ineffable

Blossom'd the laughing bridal rose.

CANTO VI

The Love-Letters

PRELUDES

I

Love's Perversity

How strange a thing a lover seems
To animals that do not love !
Lo, where he walks and talks in dreams,
And flouts us with his Lady's glove ;
How foreign is the garb he wears ;
And how his great devotion mocks
Our poor propriety, and scares
The undevout with paradox ?
His soul, through scorn of worldly care,
And great extremes of sweet and gall,
And musing much on all that's fair,
Grows witty and fantastical ;
He sobs his joy and sings his grief,
And evermore finds such delight
In simply picturing his relief,
That 'plaining seems to cure his plight ;
He makes his sorrow, when there's none ;
His fancy blows both cold and hot ;
Next to the wish that she'll be won,
His first hope is that she may not ;

He sues, yet deprecates consent ;
 Would she be captured she must fly ;
She looks too happy and content,
 For whose least pleasure he would die.
Oh, cruelty, she cannot care
 For one to whom she's always kind !
He says he's nought, but, oh, despair,
 If he's not Jove to her fond mind !
He's jealous if she pets a dove,
 She must be his with all her soul ;
Yet 'tis a postulate in love
 That part is greater than the whole ;
And all his apprehension's stress,
 When he's with her, regards her hair,
Her hand, a ribbon of her dress,
 As if his life were only there ;
Because she's constant, he will change,
 And kindest glances coldly meet,
And, all the time he seems so strange,
 His soul is fawning at her feet ;
Of smiles and simple heaven grown tired,
 He wickedly provokes her tears,
And when she weeps, as he desired,
 Falls slain with ecstasies of fears ;
He blames her, though she has no fault,
 Except the folly to be his ;
He worships her, the more to exalt
 The profanation of a kiss ;
Health's his disease ; he's never well
 But when his paleness shames her rose ;
His faith's a rock-built citadel,
 Its sign a flag that each way blows

His o'erfed fancy frets and fumes ;
And Love, in him, is fierce, like Hate,
And ruffles his ambrosial plumes
Against the bars of time and fate.

II

The Power of Love

Samson the Mighty, Solomon
The Wise, and Holy David all
Must doff their crowns to Love, for none
But fell as Love would scorn to fall !
And what may fallen spirits win,
When stripes and precepts cannot move
Only the sadness of all sin,
When look'd at in the light of Love.

THE LOVE-LETTERS

I

- ‘You ask, Will admiration halt,
 ‘Should spots appear within my Sun?
‘Oh, how I wish I knew your fault,
 ‘For Love’s tired gaze to rest upon!
‘Your graces, which have made me great,
 ‘Will I so loftily admire,
‘Yourself yourself shall emulate,
 ‘And be yourself your own desire.
‘I’ll nobly mirror you too fair,
 ‘And, when you’re false to me your glass,
‘What’s wanting you’ll by that repair,
 ‘So bring yourself through me to pass.
‘O Dearest, tell me how to prove
 ‘Goodwill which cannot be express’d;
‘The beneficial heart of love
 ‘Is labour in an idle breast.
‘Name in the world your chosen part,
 ‘And here I vow, with all the bent
‘And application of my heart
 ‘To give myself to your content.
‘Would you live on, home-worshipp’d, thus,
 ‘Not proudly high nor poorly low?

‘ Indeed the lines are fall’n to us
‘ In pleasant places ! Be it so.
‘ But would you others heav’nward move,
‘ By sight not faith, while you they admire ?
‘ I’ll help with zeal as I approve
‘ That just and merciful desire.
‘ High as the lonely moon to view
‘ I’ll lift your light ; do you decree
‘ Your place, I’ll win it ; for from you
‘ Command inspires capacity.
‘ Or, unseen, would you sway the world
‘ More surely ? Then in gracious rhyme
‘ I’ll raise your emblem, fair unfurl’d
‘ With blessing in the breeze of time.
‘ Faith removes mountains, much more love ;
‘ Let your contempt abolish me
‘ If aught of your devisal prove
‘ Too hard or high to do or be.’

2

I ended. ‘ From your Sweet-Heart, Sir’,
Said Nurse, ‘ The Dean’s man brings it
down.’
I could have kiss’d both him and her !
‘ Nurse, give him that, with half-a-crown.’
How beat my heart, how paused my breath,
When with perversely fond delay,
I broke the seal, that bore a wreath
Of roses link’d with one of bay.

3

- 'I found your note. How very kind
'To leave it there! I cannot tell
'How pleased I was, or how you find
'Words to express your thoughts so well.
'The Girls are going to the Ball
'At Wilton. If you can, *do* come;
'And any day this week you call
'Papa and I shall be at home.
'You said to Mary once—I hope
'In jest—that women *should* be vain:
'On Saturday your friend (her Pope),
'The Bishop dined with us again.
'She put the question, if they ought?
'He turn'd it cleverly away
'(For giddy Mildred cried, she thought
'We *must*), with "What we must we may."
'Dear papa laugh'd, and said 'twas sad
'To think how vain his girls would be,
'Above all Mary, now she had
'Episcopal authority.
'But I was very dull, dear friend,
'And went upstairs at last, and cried.
'Be sure to come to-day, or send
'A rose-leaf kiss'd on either side.
'Adieu! I am not well. Last night
'My dreams were wild: I often woke,
'The summer-lightning was so bright;
'And when it flash'd I thought you spoke.'

CANTO VII
The Rebulsion

PRELUDES

I

Joy and Use

CAN aught compared with wedlock be
For use? But He who made the heart
To use proportions joy. What he
Has join'd let no man put apart.
Sweet Order has its draught of bliss
Graced with the pearl of God's consent,
Ten times delightful in that 'tis
Considerate and innocent.
In vain Disorder grasps the cup ;
The pleasure's not enjoy'd but spilt,
And, if he stoops to lick it up,
It only tastes of earth and guilt.
His sorry raptures rest destroys ;
To live, like comets, they must roam ;
On settled poles turn solid joys,
And sunlike pleasures shine at home.

II

'She was Mine.'

- 'Thy tears o'erprize thy loss ! Thy wife,
'In what was she particular ?
'Others of comely face and life,
'Others as chaste and warm there are,
'And when they speak they seem to sing ;
'Beyond her sex she was not wise ;
'And there is no more common thing
'Than kindness in a woman's eyes.
'Then wherefore weep so long and fast,
'Why so exceedingly repine !
'Say, how has thy Beloved surpass'd
'So much all others ?' 'She was mine.'

THE REVULSION

I

'Twas when the spousal time of May
Hangs all the hedge with bridal wreaths,
And air's so sweet the bosom gay
Gives thanks for every breath it breathes ;
When like to like is gladly moved,
And each thing joins in Spring's refrain,
'Let those love now who never loved ;
'Let those who have loved love again' ;
That I, in whom the sweet time wrought,
Lay stretch'd within a lonely glade,
Abandon'd to delicious thought,
Beneath the softly twinkling shade.
The leaves, all stirring, mimick'd well
A neighbouring rush of rivers cold,
And, as the sun or shadow fell,
So these were green and those were gold ;
In dim recesses hyacinths droop'd,
And breadths of primrose lit the air,
Which, wandering through the woodland, stoop'd
And gather'd perfumes here and there ;
Upon the spray the squirrel swung,
And careless songsters, six or seven,
Sang lofty songs the leaves among,
Fit for their only listener, Heaven.

I sigh'd, 'Immeasurable bliss
 'Gains nothing by becoming more !
'Millions have meaning ; after this
 'Cyphers forget the integer.'

2

And so I mused, till musing brought
 A dream that shook my house of clay,
And, in my humbled heart, I thought,
 To me there yet may come a day
With this the single vestige seen
 Of comfort, earthly or divine,
My sorrow some time must have been
 Her portion, had it not been mine.
Then I, who knew, from watching life,
 That blows foreseen are slow to fall,
Rehearsed the losing of a wife,
 And faced its terrors each and all.
The self-chastising fancy show'd
 The coffin with its ghastly breath ;
The innocent sweet face that owed
 None of its innocence to death ;
The lips that used to laugh ; the knell
 That bade the world beware of mirth ;
The heartless and intolerable
 Indignity of 'earth to earth' ;
At morn remembering by degrees
 That she I dream'd about was dead ;
Love's still recurrent jubilees,
 The days that she was born, won, wed ;

The duties of my life the same,
Their meaning for the feelings gone ;
Friendship impertinent, and fame
Disgusting ; and, more harrowing none,
Small household troubles fall'n to me,
As, 'What time would I dine to-day ?'
And, oh, how could I bear to see
The noisy children at their play.
Besides, where all things limp and halt,
Could I go straight, should I alone
Have kept my love without default
Pitch'd at the true and heavenly tone ?
The festal-day might come to mind
That miss'd the gift which more endears ;
The hour which might have been more kind,
And now less fertile in vain tears ;
The good of common intercourse,
For daintier pleasures, then despised,
Now with what passionate remorse,
What poignancy of hunger prized !
The little wrong, now greatly rued,
Which no repentance now could right ;
And love, in disbelieving mood,
Deserting his celestial height.
Withal to know, God's love sent grief
To make me less the world's, and more
Meek-hearted : ah, the sick relief !
Why bow'd I not my heart before ?

3

‘What’, I exclaimed, with chill alarm,

‘If this fantastic horror shows

‘The feature of an actual harm!’

And, coming straight to Sarum Close,
As one who dreams his wife is dead,

And cannot in his slumber weep,
And moans upon his wretched bed,

And wakes, and finds her there asleep,
And laughs and sighs, so I, not less

Relieved, beheld, with blissful start,

The light and happy loveliness

Which lay so heavy on my heart.

CANTO VIII

The Koh-i-noor

PRELUDES

I

In Love

IF he's capricious she'll be so,
But, if his duties constant are,
She lets her loving favour glow
As steady as a tropic star ;
Appears there nought for which to weep,
She'll weep for nought, for his dear sake ;
She clasps her sister in her sleep ;
Her love in dreams is most awake.
Her soul, that once with pleasure shook,
Did any eyes her beauty own,
Now wonders how they dare to look
On what belongs to him alone ;
The indignity of taking gifts
Exhilarates her loving breast ;
A rapture of submission lifts
Her life into celestial rest ;
There's nothing left of what she was ;
Back to the babe the woman dies,
And all the wisdom that she has
Is to love him for being wise.

She's confident because she fears,
And, though discreet when he's away,
If none but her dear despot hears,
She prattles like a child at play.
Perchance, when all her praise is said,
He tells the news, a battle won,
On either side ten thousand dead.
'Alas !' she says ; but, if 'twere known,
She thinks, ' He's looking on my face !
' I am his joy ; whate'er I do,
' He sees such time-contenting grace
' In that, he'd have me always so !'
And, evermore, for either's sake,
To the sweet folly of the dove,
She joins the cunning of the snake,
To rivet and exalt his love ;
Her mode of candour is deceit ;
And what she thinks from what she'll say,
(Although I'll never call her cheat),
Lies far as Scotland from Cathay.
Without his knowledge he was won ;
Against his nature kept devout ;
She'll never tell him how 'twas done,
And he will never find it out.
If, sudden, he suspects her wiles,
And hears her forging chain and trap,
And looks, she sits in simple smiles,
Her two hands lying in her lap.
Her secret (privilege of the Bard,
Whose fancy is of either sex),
Is mine ; but let the darkness guard
Myst'ries that light would more perplex !

II

Love Thinking

What lifts her in my thought so far
Beyond all else ? Let Love not err !
'Tis that which all right women are,
But which I'll know in none but her.
She is to me the only Ark
Of that high mystery which locks
The lips of joy, or speaks in dark
Enigmas and in paradox ;
That potent charm, which none can fly,
Nor would, which makes me bond and free,
Nor can I tell if first 'twas I
Chose it, or it elected me ;
Which, when I look intentest, lo,
Cheats most mine eyes, albeit my heart,
Content to feel and not to know,
Perceives it all in every part ;
I kiss its cheek ; its life divine
Exhales from its resplendent shroud ;
Ixion's fate reversed is mine,
Authentic Juno seems a cloud ;
I feel a blessed warmth, I see
A bright circumference of rays,
But darkness, where the sun should be,
Fills admiration with amaze ;
And when, for joy's relief, I think
To fathom with the line of thought
The well from which I, blissful, drink,
The spring's so deep I come to nought.

III

The Kiss

‘I saw you take his kiss!’ ‘’Tis true.’

‘O, modesty!’ ‘’Twas strictly kept:

‘He thought me asleep; at least, I knew

‘He thought I thought he thought I slept.’

THE KOH-I-NOOR

I

‘Be man’s hard virtues highly wrought,
‘But let my gentle Mistress be,
‘In every look, word, deed, and thought,
‘Nothing but sweet and womanly !
‘Her virtues please my virtuous mood,
‘But what at all times I admire
‘Is, not that she is wise or good,
‘But just the thing which I desire.
‘With versatility to sing
‘The theme of love to any strain,
‘If oft’nest she is anything,
‘Be it careless, talkative, and vain.
‘That seems in her supremest grace
‘Which, virtue or not, apprises me
‘That my familiar thoughts embrace
‘Unfathomable mystery.’

2

I answer’d thus ; for she desired
To know what mind I most approved ;
Partly to learn what she inquired,
Partly to get the praise she loved.

3

I praised her, but no praise could fill
The depths of her desire to please,
Though dull to others as a Will
To them that have no legacies.
The more I praised the more she shone,
Her eyes incredulously bright,
And all her happy beauty blown
Beneath the beams of my delight.
Sweet rivalry was thus begot ;
By turns, my speech, in passion's style,
With flatteries the truth o'ershot,
And she surpass'd them with her smile.

4

' You have my heart so sweetly seized,
' And I confess, nay, 'tis my pride
' That I'm with you so solely pleased,
' That, if I'm pleased with aught beside,
' As music, or the month of June,
' My friend's devotion, or his wit,
' A rose, a rainbow, or the moon,
' It is that you illustrate it.
' All these are parts, you are the whole ;
' You fit the taste for Paradise,
' To which your charms draw up the soul
' As turning spirals draw the eyes.
' Nature to you was more than kind ;
' 'Twas fond perversity to dress
' So much simplicity of mind
' In such a pomp of loveliness !

- ‘But, praising you, the fancy deft
‘Flies wide, and lets the quarry stray,
‘And, when all’s said, there’s something left,
‘And that’s the thing I meant to say.’
‘Dear Felix!’ ‘Sweet, my Love!’ But there
Was Aunt Maude’s noisy ring and knock!
‘Stay, Felix; you have caught my hair.
‘Stoop! Thank you!’ ‘May I have that lock?’
‘Not now. Good morning, Aunt!’ ‘Why, Puss,
‘You look magnificent to-day.’
‘Here’s Felix, Aunt.’ ‘Fox and green goose!
‘Who handsome gets should handsome pay!’
‘Aunt, you are friends!’ ‘Ah, to be sure!
‘Good morning! Go on flattering, Sir;
‘A woman, like the Koh-i-noor,
‘Mounts to the price that’s put on her.’

CANTO IX

The Friends

PRELUDES

I

The Nursling of Civility

Lo, how the woman once was woo'd :
Forth leapt the savage from his lair,
And fell'd her, and to nuptials rude
He dragged her, bleeding, by the hair.
From that to Chloe's dainty wiles
And Portia's dignified consent,
What distance ! But these Pagan styles
How far below Time's fair intent !
Siegfried sued Kriemhild. Sweeter life
Could Love's self covet ? Yet 'tis sung
In what rough sort he chid his wife
For want of curb upon her tongue !
Shall Love, where last I leave him, halt ?
Nay ; none can fancy or foresee
To how strange bliss may time exalt
This nursling of civility.

II

The Foreign Land

A woman is a foreign land,
Of which, though there he settle young,
A man will ne'er quite understand
The customs, politics, and tongue.
The foolish hie them post-haste through,
See fashions odd, and prospects fair,
Learn of the language, 'How d'ye do',
And go and brag they have been there.
The most for leave to trade apply,
For once, at Empire's seat, her heart,
Then get what knowledge ear and eye
Glean chancewise in the life-long mar'
And certain others, few and fit,
Attach them to the Court, and see
The Country's best, its accent hit,
And partly sound its polity.

III

Disappointment

'The bliss which woman's charms bespeak,
'I've sought in many, found in none !'
'In many 'tis in vain you seek
'What can be found in only one.'

THE FRIENDS

I

Frank's long, dull letter, lying by
The gay sash from Honoria's waist,
Reproach'd me ; passion spared a sigh
For friendship without fault disgraced.
How should I greet him ? how pretend
I felt the love he once inspired ?
Time was when either, in his friend,
His own deserts with joy admired ;
We took one side in school-debate,
Like hopes pursued with equal thirst,
Were even-bracketed by Fate,
Twin-Wranglers, seventh from the First ;
And either loved a lady's laugh
More than all music ; he and I
Were perfect in the pleasant half
Of universal charity.

2

From pride of likeness thus I loved
Him, and he me, till love begot
The lowliness which now approved
Nothing but that which I was not.

Blest was the pride of feeling so
 Subjected to a girl's soft reign.
She was my vanity, and, oh,
 All other vanities how vain !

3

Frank follow'd in his letter's track,
 And set my guilty heart at ease
By echoing my excuses back
 With just the same apologies.
So he had slighted me as well !
 Nor was my mind disburthen'd less
When what I sought excuse to tell
 He of himself did first confess.

4

Each, rapturous, praised his lady's worth ;
 He eloquently thus : ' Her face
' Is the summ'd sweetness of the earth,
 ' Her soul the glass of heaven's grace,
' To which she leads me by the hand ;
 ' Or, briefly all the truth to say
' To you, who briefly understand,
 ' She is both heaven and the way.
' Displeasures and resentments pass
 ' Athwart her charitable eyes
' More fleetingly than breath from glass,
 ' Or truth from foolish memories ;
' Her heart's so touch'd with others' woes
 ' She has no need of chastisement ;

'Her gentle life' conditions close,
 'Like God's commandments, with content,
 'And make an aspect calm and gay,
 'Where sweet affections come and go,
 'Till all who see her, smile and say,
 'How fair, and happy that she's so !
 'She is so lovely, true, and pure,
 'Her virtue virtue so endears,
 'That often, when I think of her,
 'Life's meanness fills mine eyes with tears—
 'You paint Miss Churchill ! Pray go on—'
 'She's perfect, and, if joy was much
 'To think her nature's paragon,
 "'Tis more that there's another such !'

5

Praising and paying back their praise
 With rapturous hearts, t'ward Sarum Spire
 We walk'd, in evening's golden haze,
 Friendship from passion stealing fire.
 In joy's crown danced the feather jest,
 And, parting by the Deanery door,
 Clasp'd hands, less shy than words, confess'd
 We had not been true friends before.

CANTO X
The Epitaph
PRELUDES

I

Frost in Harvest

THE lover who, across a gulf
Of ceremony, views his Love,
And dares not yet address herself,
Pays worship to her stolen glove.
The gulf o'erleapt, the lover wed,
It happens oft, (let truth be told),
The halo leaves the sacred head,
Respect grows lax, the worship cold,
And all love's May-day promising,
Like song of birds before they pair,
Or flush of flowers in boastful Spring,
Dies out, and leaves the Summer bare.
Yet should a man, it seems to me,
Honour what honourable is,
For some more honourable plea
Than only that it is not his.
The gentle wife, who decks his board
And makes his day to have no night,
Whose wishes wait upon her lord,
Who finds her own in his delight,
Is she another now than she
Who, mistress of her maiden charms,

At his wild prayer, incredibly
Committed them to his proud arms?
Unless her choice of him's a slur
Which makes her proper credit dim,
He never enough can honour her
Who past all speech has honour'd him.

II

Felicity

To marry her and take her home !
The poet, painting pureness, tells
Of lilies ; figures power by Rome ;
And each thing shows by something else !
But through the songs of poets look,
And who so lucky to have found
In universal nature's book
A likeness for a life so crown'd !
Here they speak best who best express
Their inability to speak,
And none are strong, but who confess
With happy skill that they are weak.

III

Marriage Indissoluble

'In heaven none marry.' Grant the most
Which may by this dark word be meant,
Who shall forbid the eternal boast
'I kiss'd, and kiss'd with her consent !'
If here, to Love, past favour is
A present boast, delight, and chain,
What lacks of honour, bond, and bliss,
Where Now and Then are no more twain !

THE EPITAPH

I

'At Church, in twelve hours more, we meet !
'This, Dearest, is our last farewell.'
'Oh, Felix, do you love me?' 'Sweet,
'Why do you ask?' 'I cannot tell.'

2

And was it no vain fantasy
That raised me from the earth with pride?
Should I to-morrow verily
Be Bridegroom, and Honoria Bride?
Should I, in simple fact, henceforth
Live unconditionally lord
Of her whose smile for brightest worth
Seem'd all too bountiful reward?
Incredible life's promise seem'd,
Or, credible, for life too great;
Love his own deity blasphemed,
And doff'd at last his heavenly state.
What law, if man could mount so high,
To further insolence set bars,
And kept the chaste moon in the sky,
And bade him not tread out the stars !

3

Patience and hope had parted truce,
And, sun-like, Love obscured his ray
With dazzling mists, driven up profuse
Before his own triumphant way.
I thought with prayer how Jacob paid
The patient price of Rachel ; then,
Of that calm grace Tobias said,
And Sarah's innocent 'Amen.'
Without avail ! O'erwhelming wealth,
The wondrous gift of God so near,
Which should have been delight and health,
Made heart and spirit sick and sere.
Until at last the soul of love,
That recks not of its own delight,
Awoke and bade the mists remove,
And then once more I breathed aright ;
And I rehears'd my marriage vow,
And swore her welfare to prefer
To all things, and for aye as now
To live, not for myself, but her.
Forth, from the glittering spirit's peace
And gaiety ineffable,
Stream'd to the heart delight and ease,
As from an overflowing well ;
And, orderly deriving thence
Its pleasure perfect and allow'd,
Bright with the spirit shone the sense,
As with the sun a fleecy cloud.

If now to part with her could make
Her pleasure greater, sorrow less,
I for my epitaph would take
‘To serve seem’d more than to possess.’
And I perceiv’d, (the vision sweet
Dimming with happy dew mine eyes),
That love and joy are torches lit
From altar-fires of sacrifice.

4

Across the sky the daylight crept,
And birds grew garrulous in the grove,
And on my marriage-morn I slept
A soft sleep, undisturb’d by love.

CANTO XI
The Wedding

PRELUDES

I

Platonic Love

RIGHT art thou who wouldst rather be
A doorkeeper in Love's fair house,
Than lead the wretched revelry
Where fools at swinish troughs carouse.
But do not boast of being least ;
And if to kiss thy Mistress' skirt
Amaze thy brain, scorn not the Priest
Whom greater honours do not hurt.
Stand off and gaze, if more than this
Be more than thou canst understand,
Revering him whose power of bliss,
Angelic, dares to seize her hand,
Or whose seraphic love makes flight
To the apprehension of her lips ;
And think, the sun of such delight
From thine own darkness takes eclipse.
And, wouldst thou to the same aspire,
This is the art thou must employ,
Live greatly ; so shalt thou acquire
Unknown capacities of joy.

II

A Demonstration

Nature, with endless being rife,
Parts each thing into 'him' and 'her,'
And, in the arithmetic of life,
The smallest unit is a pair ;
And thus, oh, strange, sweet half of me,
If I confess a loftier flame,
If more I love high Heaven than thee,
I more than love thee, thee I am ;
And, if the world's not built of lies,
Nor all a cheat the Gospel tells,
If that which from the dead shall rise
Be I indeed, not something else,
There's no position more secure
In reason or in faith than this,
That those conditions must endure,
Which, wanting, I myself should miss.

III

The Symbol

As if I chafed the sparks from glass,
And said, 'It lightens,' hitherto
The songs I've made of love may pass
For all but for proportion true ;
But likeness and proportion both
Now fail, as if a child in glee,
Catching the flakes of the salt froth,
Cried, 'Look, my mother, here's the sea.'

Yet, by the help of what's so weak,
 But not diverse, to those who know,
And only unto those I speak,
 May far-infering fancy show
Love's living sea by coasts uncurb'd,
 Its depth, its mystery, and its might,
Its indignation if disturb'd,
 The glittering peace of its delight.

IV

Constancy rewarded

I vow'd unvarying faith, and she,
 To whom in full I pay that vow,
Rewards me with variety
 Which men who change can never know.

THE WEDDING

I

Life smitten with a feverish chill,
The brain too tired to understand,
In apathy of heart and will,
I took the woman from the hand
Of him who stood for God, and heard
Of Christ, and of the Church his Bride ;
The Feast, by presence of the Lord
And his first Wonder, beautified ;
The mystic sense to Christian men ;
The bonds in innocency made,
And gravely to be enter'd then
For children, godliness, and aid,
And honour'd, and kept free from smirch ;
And how a man must love his wife
No less than Christ did love his Church,
If need be, giving her his life ;
And, vowing then the mutual vow,
The tongue spoke, but intention slept.
'Tis well for us heaven asks not how
We take this oath, but how 'tis kept.

2

O, bold seal of a bashful bond,
Which makes the marriage-day to be,
To those before it and beyond,
An iceberg in an Indian sea !

3

‘ Now, while she’s changing,’ said the Dean,
 ‘ Her bridal for her travelling dress,
‘ I’ll preach allegiance to your queen !
 ‘ Preaching’s the thing which I profess ;
‘ And one more minute’s mine ! You know
 ‘ I’ve paid my girl a father’s debt,
‘ And this last charge is all I owe.
 ‘ She’s yours ; but I love more than yet
‘ You can ; such fondness only wakes
 ‘ When time has raised the heart above
‘ The prejudice of youth, which makes
 ‘ Beauty conditional to love.
‘ Prepare to meet the weak alarms
 ‘ Of novel nearness : recollect
‘ The eye which magnifies her charms
 ‘ Is microscopic for defect.
‘ Fear comes at first : but soon, rejoiced,
 ‘ You’ll find your strong and tender loves,
‘ Like holy rocks by Druids poised,
 ‘ The least force shakes, but none removes.
‘ Her strength is your esteem ; beware
 ‘ Of finding fault ; her will’s unnerv’d
‘ By blame ; from you ’twould be despair ;
 ‘ But praise that is not quite deserv’d
‘ Will all her noble nature move
 ‘ To make your utmost wishes true.
‘ Yet think, while mending thus your Love,
 ‘ Of matching her ideal too !
‘ The death of nuptial joy is sloth :
 ‘ To keep your mistress in your wife,

'Keep to the very height your oath,
 'And honour her with arduous life.
 'Lastly, no personal reverence doff.
 'Life's all externals unto those
 'Who pluck the blushing petals off,
 'To find the secret of the rose.—
 How long she's tarrying ! Green's Hotel
 'I'm sure you'll like. The charge is fair,
 'The wines good. I remember well
 'I stay'd once, with her Mother, there.
 'A tender conscience of her vow
 'That Mother had ! She's so like her !'
 But Mrs. Fife, much flurried, now
 Whisper'd, 'Miss Honor's ready, Sir.'

4

Whirl'd off at last, for speech I sought,
 To keep shy Love in countenance ;
 But, whilst I vainly tax'd my thought,
 Her voice deliver'd mine from trance :
 'Look, is not this a pretty shawl,
 'Aunt's parting gift.' 'She's always kind.'
 'The new wing spoils Sir John's old Hall :
 'You'll see it, if you pull the blind.'

5

I drew the silk : in heaven the night
 Was dawning ; lovely Venus shone,
 In languishment of tearful light,
 Swathed by the red breath of the sun.

CANTO XII

Husband and Wife

PRELUDES

I

The Married Lover

WHY, having won her, do I woo?
Because her spirit's vestal grace
Provokes me always to pursue,
But, spirit-like, eludes embrace;
Because her womanhood is such
That, as on court-days subjects kiss
The Queen's hand, yet so near a touch
Affirms no mean familiarity,
Nay, rather marks more fair the height
Which can with safety so neglect
To dread, as lower ladies might,
That grace could meet with disrespect,
Thus she with happy favour feeds
Allegiance from a love so high
That thence no false conceit proceeds
Of difference bridged, or state put by;
Because, although in act and word
As lowly as a wife can be,
Her manners, when they call me lord,
Remind me 'tis by courtesy;

Not with her least consent of will,
Which would my proud affection hurt,
But by the noble style that still
Imputes an unattain'd desert ;
Because her gay and lofty brows,
When all is won which hope can ask,
Reflect a light of hopeless snows
That bright in virgin ether bask ;
Because, though free of the outer court
I am, this Temple keeps its shrine
Sacred to Heaven ; because, in short,
She's not and never can be mine.

II

The Amaranth

Feasts satiate ; stars distress with height ;
Friendship means well, but misses reach,
And wearies in its best delight
Vex'd with the vanities of speech ;
Too long regarded, roses even
Afflict the mind with fond unrest ;
And to converse direct with Heaven
Is oft a labour in the breast ;
Whate'er the up-looking soul admires,
Whate'er the senses' banquet be,
Fatigues at last with vain desires,
Or sickens by satiety ;
But truly my delight was more
In her to whom I'm bound for aye
Yesterday than the day before,
And more to-day than yesterday.

HUSBAND AND WIFE

I

I, while the shop-girl fitted on
The sand-shoes, look'd where, down the bay,
The sea glow'd with a shrouded sun.
'I'm ready, Felix ; will you pay ?'
That was my first expense for this
Sweet Stranger, now my three days' Wife.
How light the touches are that kiss
The music from the chords of life !

2

Her feet, by half-a-mile of sea,
In spotless sand left shapely prints ;
With agates, then, she loaded me ;
(The lapidary call'd them flints) ;
Then, at her wish, I hail'd a boat,
To take her to the ships-of-war,
At anchor, each a lazy mote
Black in the brilliance, miles from shore.

3

The morning breeze the canvas fill'd,
Lifting us o'er the bright-ridged gulf,
And every lurch my darling thrill'd
With light fear smiling at itself ;

And, dashing past the Arrogant,
Asleep upon the restless wave,
After its cruise in the Levant,
We reach'd the Wolf, and signal gave
For help to board : with caution meet,
My bride was placed within the chair,
The red flag wrapp'd about her feet,
And so swung laughing through the air.

4

'Look, Love,' she said, 'there's Frederick
Graham,
'My cousin, whom you met, you know.'
And seeing us, the brave man came,
And made his frank and courteous bow,
And gave my hand a sailor's shake,
And said, 'You ask'd me to the Hurst :
'I never thought my luck would make
'Your wife and you my guests the first.'
And Honor, cruel, 'Nor did we :
'Have you not lately changed your ship ?'
'Yes : I'm Commander, now,' said he,
With a slight quiver of the lip.
We saw the vessel, shown with pride ;
Took luncheon ; I must eat his salt !
Parting he said, (I fear my bride
Found him unselfish to a fault),
His wish, he saw, had come to pass,
(And so, indeed, her face express'd),
That that should be, whatever 'twas,
Which made his Cousin happiest.

We left him looking from above ;
Rich bankrupt ! for he could afford
To say most proudly that his love
Was virtue and its own reward.
But others loved as well as he,
(Thought I, half-anger'd), and if fate,
Unfair, had only fashion'd me
As hapless, I had been as great.

5

As souls, ambitious, but low-born,
If raised past hope by luck or wit,
All pride of place will proudly scorn,
And live as they'd been used to it,
So we two worc our strange estate :
Familiar, unaffected, free,
We talk'd, until the dusk grew late,
Of this and that ; but, after tea,
As doubtful if a lot so sweet
As ours was ours in very sooth,
Like children, to promote conceit,
We feign'd that it was not the truth ;
And she assumed the maiden coy,
And I adored remorseless charms,
And then we clapp'd our hands for joy,
And ran into each other's arms.

THE EPILOGUE

I

‘AH, dearest Wife, a fresh-lit fire
‘Sends forth to heaven great shows of fume,
‘And watchers, far away, admire;
‘But when the flames their power assume,
‘The more they burn the less they show,
‘The clouds no longer smirch the sky,
‘And then the flames intensest glow
‘When far-off watchers think they die.
‘The fumes of early love my verse
‘Has figured—’ ‘You must paint the flame!’
‘’Twould merit the Promethean curse!
‘But now, Sweet, for your praise and blame.’
‘You speak too boldly; veils are due
‘To women’s feelings.’ ‘Fear not this!
‘Women will vow I say not true,
‘And men believe the lips they kiss.’
‘I did not call you “Dear” or “Love,”
‘I think, till after Frank was born.’
‘That fault I cannot well remove;
‘The rhymes’—but Frank now blew his horn,
And Walter bark’d, on hands and knees,
At Baby in the mignonette,
And all made, full-cry, for the trees
Where Felix and his Wife were set.

Again disturb'd, (crickets have cares !)
True to their annual use they rose,
To offer thanks at Evening Prayers
In three times sacred Sarum Close.

2

Passing, they left a gift of wine
At Widow Neale's. Her daughter said :
' O, Ma'am, she's sinking ! For a sign,
' She cried just now, of him that's dead,
' " Mary, he's somewhere close above,
' " Weeping and wailing his dead wife,
' " With forceful prayers and fatal love
' " Conjuring me to come to life.
' " A spirit is terrible though dear !
' " It comes by night, and sucks my breath,
' " And draws me with desire and fear."
' Ah, Ma'am, she'll soon be his in death !'

3

Vaughan, when his kind Wife's eyes were dry,
Said, ' This thought crosses me, my Dove ;
' If Heaven should proffer, when we die,
' Some unconceiv'd, superior love,
' How take the exchange without despair,
' Without worse folly how refuse ?'
But she, who, wise as she was fair,
For subtle doubts had simple clues,
Said, ' Custom sanctifies, and faith
' Is more than joy : ah, how desire
' In any heaven a different path,
' Though, found at first, it had been higher ?

' Yet love makes death a dreadful thought !
' Felix, at what a price we live !'
But present pleasures soon forgot
The future's dread alternative ;
For, as became the festal time,
He cheer'd her heart with tender praise,
And speeches wanting only rhyme
To make them like his winged lays.
He discommended girlhood. ' What
' For sweetness like the ten-years' wife,
' Whose customary love is not
' Her passion, or her play, but life ?
' With beauties so maturely fair,
' Affecting, mild, and manifold,
' May girlish charms no more compare
' Than apples green with apples gold.
' Ah, still unpraised Honoria, Heaven,
' When you into my arms it gave,
' Left nought hereafter to be given
' But grace to feel the good I have.'

4

Her own and manhood's modesty
Made dumb her love, but, on their road,
His hand in hers felt soft reply,
And like rejoinder fond bestow'd ;
And, when the carriage set them down,
' How strange,' said he, ' 'twould seem to meet,
' When pacing, as we now this town,
' A Florence or a Lisbon Street

‘That Laura or that Catherine, who,
‘In the remote, romantic years,
‘From Petrarch or Camoens drew
‘Their songs and their immortal tears!’
But here their converse had its end;
For, crossing the Cathedral Lawn,
There came an ancient college-friend,
Who, introduced to Mrs. Vaughan,
Lifted his hat, and bow’d and smiled,
And fill’d her kind large eyes with joy,
By patting on the cheek her child,
With, ‘Is he yours, this handsome boy?’

THE VICTORIES OF LOVE

‘Da quod amo : amo enim, et hoc tu dedisti.’

ST. AUGUSTINE

BOOK I

I

FROM FREDERICK GRAHAM

MOTHER, I smile at your alarms !
I own, indeed, my Cousin's charms,
But, like all nursery maladies,
Love is not badly taken twice.
Have you forgotten Charlotte Hayes,
My playmate in the pleasant days
At Knatchley, and her sister, Anne,
The twins, so made on the same plan,
That one wore blue, the other white,
To mark them to their father's sight ;
And how, at Knatchley harvesting,
You bade me kiss her in the ring,
Like Anne and all the others? You,
That never of my sickness knew,
Will laugh, yet had I the disease,
And gravely, if the signs are these :
As, ere the Spring has any power,
The almond branch all turns to flower,
Though not a leaf is out, so she
The bloom of life provoked in me ;
And, hard till then and selfish, I
Was thenceforth nought but sanctity

And service : life was mere delight
In being wholly good and right,
As she was ; just, without a slur ;
Honouring myself no less than her ;
Obeying, in the loneliest place,
Ev'n to the slightest gesture, grace,
Assured that one so fair, so true,
He only served that was so too.
For me, hence weak towards the weak,
No more the unnested blackbird's shriek
Startled the light-leaved wood ; on high
Wander'd the gadding butterfly,
Unscared by my flung cap ; the bee,
Rifling the hollyhock in glee,
Was no more trapp'd with his own flower
And for his honey slain. Her power,
From great things even to the grass
Through which the unfenced footways pass,
Was law, and that which keeps the law,
Cherubic gaiety and awe ;
Day was her doing, and the lark
Had reason for his song ; the dark
In anagram innumerable spelt
Her name with stars that throb'd and felt ;
'Twas the sad summit of delight
To wake and weep for her at night ;
She turn'd to triumph or to shame
The strife of every childish game ;
The heart would come into my throat
At rosebuds ; howsoe'er remote,
In opposition or consent,
Each thing, or person, or event,

Or seeming neutral howsoe'er,
All, in the live, electric air,
Awoke, took aspect, and confess'd
In her a centre of unrest,
Yea, stocks and stones within me bred
Anxieties of joy and dread.

O, bright apocalyptic sky
O'erarching childhood ! Far and nigh
Mystery and obscuration none,
Yet nowhere any moon or sun !
What reason for these sighs ? What hope,
Daunting with its audacious scope
The disconcerted heart, affects
These ceremonies and respects ?
Why stratagems in everything ?
Why, why not kiss her in the ring ?
'Tis nothing strange that warriors bold,
Whose fierce, forecasting eyes behold
The city they desire to sack,
Humbly begin their proud attack
By delving ditches two miles off,
Aware how the fair place would scoff
At hasty wooing ; but, O child,
Why thus approach thy playmate mild ?

One morning, when it flush'd my thought
That, what in me such wonder wrought
Was call'd, in men and women, love,
And, sick with vanity thereof,
I, saying loud, ' I love her ', told
My secret to myself, behold
A crisis in my mystery !
For, suddenly, I seem'd to be

Whirl'd round, and bound with showers of threads,
 As when the furious spider sheds
 Captivity upon the fly
 To still his buzzing till he die ;
 Only, with me, the bonds that flew,
 Enfolding, thrill'd me through and through
 With bliss beyond aught heaven can have,
 And pride to dream myself her slave.

A long, green slip of wilder'd land,
 With Knatchley Wood on either hand,
 Sunder'd our home from hers. This day
 Glad was I as I went her way.
 I stretch'd my arms to the sky, and sprang
 O'er the elastic sod, and sang
 ' I love her, love her ! ' to an air
 Which with the words came then and there ;
 And even now, when I would know
 All was not always dull and low,
 I mind me awhile of the sweet strain
 Love taught me in that lonely lane.

Such glories fade, with no more mark
 Than when the sunset dies to dark.
 They pass, the rapture and the grace
 Ineffable, their only trace
 A heart which, having felt no less
 Than pure and perfect happiness,
 Is duly dainty of delight ;
 A patient, poignant appetite
 For pleasures that exceed so much
 The poor things which the world calls such,
 That, when these lure it, then you may
 The lion with a wisp of hay. •

That Charlotte, whom we scarcely knew
From Anne but by her ribbons blue,
Was loved, Anne less than look'd at, shows
That liking still by favour goes !
This Love is a Divinity,
And holds his high election free
Of human merit ; or let's say,
A child by ladies call'd to play,
But careless of their becks and wiles,
Till, seeing one who sits and smiles
Like any else, yet only charms,
He cries to come into her arms.
Then, for my Cousins, fear me not !
None ever loved because he ought.
Fatal were else this graceful house,
So full of light from ladies' brows.
There's Mary ; Heaven in her appears
Like sunshine through the shower's bright tears ;
Mildred's of Earth, yet happier far
Than most men's thoughts of Heaven are ;
But, for Honoria, Heaven and Earth
Seal'd amity in her sweet birth.
The noble Girl ! With whom she talks
She knights first with her smile ; she walks,
Stands, dances, to such sweet effect,
Alone she seems to move erect.
The brightest and the chastest brow
Rules o'er a cheek which seems to show
That love, as a mere vague suspense
Of apprehensive innocence,
Perturbs her heart ; love without aim
Or object, like the sunlit flame

That in the Vestals' Temple glow'd,
Without the image of a god.
And this simplicity most pure
She sets off with no less allure
Of culture, subtly skill'd to raise
The power, the pride, and mutual praise
Of human personality
Above the common sort so high,
It makes such homely souls as mine
Marvel how brightly life may shine.
How you would love her ! Even in dress
She makes the common mode express
New knowledge of what's fit so well
'Tis virtue gaily visible !
Nay, but her silken sash to me
Were more than all morality,
Had not the old, sweet, feverous ill
Left me the master of my will !

So, Mother, feel at rest, and please
To send my books on board. With these,
When I go hence, all idle hours
Shall help my pleasures and my powers.
I've time, you know, to fill my post,
And yet make up for schooling lost
Through young sea-service. They all speak
German with ease ; and this, with Greek,
(Which Dr. Churchill thought I knew,)
And history, which I fail'd in too,
Will stop a gap I somewhat dread,
After the happy life I've led
With these my friends ; and sweet 'twill be
To abridge the space from them to me.

II

FROM MRS. GRAHAM

My Child, Honoria Churchill sways
A double power through Charlotte Hayes.
In minds to first-love's memory pledged
The second Cupid's born full-fledged.
I saw, and trembled for the day
When you should see her beauty, gay
And pure as apple-blooms, that show
Outside a blush and inside snow,
Her high and touching elegance
Of order'd life as free as chance.
Ah, haste from her bewitching side,
No friend for you. far less a bride !
But, warning from a hope so wild,
I wrong you. Yet this know, my Child
He that but once too nearly hears
The music of forefended spheres,
Is thenceforth lonely, and for all
His days like one who treads the Wall
Of China, and, on this hand, sees
Cities and their civilities,
And, on the other, lions. Well,
(Your rash reply I thus foretell,)
Good is the knowledge of what's fair,
Though bought with temporal despair !

Yes, good for one, but not for two.
Will it content a wife that you
Should pine for love, in love's embrace,
Through having known a happier grace ;
And break with inward sighs your rest,
Because, though good, she's not the best ?
You would, you think, be just and kind,
And keep your counsel ! You will find
You cannot such a secret keep ;
'Twill out, like murder, in your sleep ;
A touch will tell it, though, for pride,
She may her bitter knowledge hide ;
And, while she accepts love's make-believe,
You'll twice despise what you'd deceive.

I send the books. Dear Child, adieu !
Tell me of all you are and do.
I know, thank God, whate'er it be,
'Twill need no veil 'twixt you and me.

III

FROM FREDERICK

The multitude of voices blythe
Of early day, the hissing scythe
Across the dew drawn and withdrawn,
The noisy peacock on the lawn,
These, and the sun's eye-gladdening gleam,
This morning, chased the sweetest dream
That e'er shed penitential grace
On life's forgetful commonplace ;
Yet 'twas no sweeter than the spell
To which I woke to say farewell.

Noon finds me many a mile removed
From her who must not be beloved ;
And us the waste sea soon shall part,
Heaving for aye, without a heart !
Mother, what need to warn me so ?
I love Miss Churchill ? Ah, no, no.
I view, enchanted, from afar,
And love her as I love a star.
For, not to speak of colder fear,
Which keeps my fancy calm, I hear,
Under her life's gay progress hurl'd,
The wheels of the preponderant world,
Set sharp with swords that fool to slay
Who blunders from a poor byway,

To covet beauty with a crown
Of earthly blessing added on ;
And she's so much, it seems to me,
Beyond all women womanly,
I dread to think how he should fare
Who came so near as to despair.

IV

FROM FREDERICK

Yonder the sombre vessel rides
Where my obscure condition hides.
Waves scud to shore against the wind
That flings the sprinkling surf behind ;
In port the bickering pennons show
Which way the ships would gladly go ;
Through Edgecumb Park the rooted trees
Are tossing, reckless, in the breeze ;
On top of Edgecumb's firm-set tower,
As foils, not foibles, of its power,
The light vanes do themselves adjust
To every veering of the gust :
By me alone may nought be given
To guidance of the airs of heaven ?
In battle or peace, in calm or storm,
Should I my daily task perform,
Better a thousand times for love
Who should my secret soul reprove ?

Beholding one like her, a man
Longs to lay down his life ! How can
Aught to itself seem thus enough,
When I have so much need thereof ?
Blest in her place, blissful is she ;
And I, departing, seem to be

Like the strange waif that comes to run
A few days flaming near the sun,
And carries back, through boundless night,
Its lessening memory of light.

Oh, my dear Mother, I confess
To a deep grief of homelessness,
Unfelt, save once, before. 'Tis years
Since such a shower of girlish tears
Disgraced me ! But this wretched Inn,
At Plymouth, is so full of din,
Talkings and trappings to and fro.
And then my ship, to which I go
To-night, is no more home. I dread,
As strange, the life I long have led ;
And as, when first I went to school,
And found the horror of a rule
Which only ask'd to be obey'd,
I lay and wept, of dawn afraid,
And thought, with bursting heart, of one
Who, from her little, wayward son,
Required obedience, but above
Obedience still regarded love,
So change I that enchanting place,
The abode of innocence and grace
And gaiety without reproof,
For the black gun-deck's louring roof,
Blind and inevitable law
Which makes light duties burdens, awe
Which is not reverence, laughter gain'd
At cost of purities profaned,
And whatsoever most may stir
Remorseful passion towards her,

Whom to behold is to depart
From all defect of life and heart.

But, Mother, I shall go on shore,
And see my Cousin yet once more !
'Twere wild to hope for her, you say.
I've torn and cast those words away.
Surely there's hope ! For life 'tis well
Love without hope's impossible ;
So, if I love, it is that hope
Is not outside the outer scope
Of fancy. You speak truth : this hour
I must resist, or lose the power.
What ! and, when some short months are o'er,
Be not much other than before ?
Drop from the bright and virtuous sphere
In which I'm held but while she's dear ?
For daily life's dull, senseless mood,
Slay the fine nerves of gratitude
And sweet allegiance, which I owe
Whether the debt be weal or woe ?
Nay, Mother, I, forewarn'd, prefer
To want for all in wanting her.

For all ? Love's best is not bereft
Ever from him to whom is left
The trust that God will not deceive
His creature, fashion'd to believe
The prophecies of pure desire.
Not loss, not death, my love shall tire.
A mystery does my heart foretell ;
Nor do I press the oracle
For explanations. Leave me alone,
And let in me love's will be done.

V

FROM FREDERICK

Fashion'd by Heaven and by art
 So is she, that she makes the heart
 Ache and o'erflow with tears, that grace
 So lovely fair should have for place,
 (Deeming itself at home the while,)
 The unworthy earth ! To see her smile
 Amid this waste of pain and sin,
 As only knowing the heaven within,
 Is sweet, and does for pity stir
 Passion to be her minister :
 Wherefore last night I lay awake,
 And said, ' Ah, Lord, for thy love's sake,
 Give not this darling child of thine
 To care less reverent than mine ! '
 And, as true faith was in my word,
 I trust, I trust that I was heard.

The waves, this morning, sped to land,
 And shouted hoarse to touch the strand,
 Where Spring, that goes not out to sea,
 Lay laughing in her lovely glee ;
 And, so, my life was sunlit spray
 And tumult, as, once more to-day,
 For long farewell did I draw near
 My Cousin, desperately dear.

Faint, fierce, the truth that hope was none
Gleam'd like the lightning in the sun :
Yet hope I had, and joy thereof.
The father of love is hope, (though love
Lives orphan'd on, when hope is dead,)
And, out of my immediate dread
And crisis of the coming hour,
Did hope itself draw sudden power.
So the still brooding storm, in Spring,
Makes all the birds begin to sing.

Mother, your foresight did not err :
I've lost the world, and not won her.
And yet, ah, laugh not, when you think
What cup of life I sought to drink !
The bold, said I, have climb'd to bliss
Absurd, impossible, as this,
With nought to help them but so great
A heart it fascinates their fate.
If ever Heaven heard man's desire,
Mine, being made of altar-fire,
Must come to pass, and it will be
That she will wait, when she shall see,
This evening, how I go to get,
By means unknown, I know not yet
Quite what, but ground whereon to stand,
And plead more plainly for her hand !

And so I raved, and cast in hope
A superstitious horoscope !
And still, though something in her face
Portended 'No !' with such a grace
It burthen'd me with thankfulness,
Nothing was credible but 'Yes.'

Therefore, through time's close pressure bold,
I praised myself, and boastful told
My deeds at Acre ; strain'd the chance
I had of honour and advance
In war to come ; and would not see
Sad silence meant, ' What's this to me.'

When half my precious hour was gone,
She rose to greet a Mr. Vaughan ;
And, as the image of the moon
Breaks up, within some still lagoon
That feels the soft wind suddenly,
Or tide fresh flowing from the sea,
And turns to giddy flames that go
Over the water to and fro,
Thus, when he took her hand to-night,
Her lovely gravity of light
Was scatter'd into many smiles
And flattering weakness. Hope beguiles
No more my heart, dear Mother. He,
By jealous looks, o'erhonour'd me.

With nought to do, and fondly fain
To hear her singing once again,
I stay'd, and turn'd her music o'er ;
Then came she with me to the door.
' Dearest Honoria', I said,
(By my despair familiar made,)
' Heaven bless you !' Oh, to have back then stepp'd
And fallen upon her neck, and wept,
And said, ' My friend, I owe you all
' I am, and have, and hope for. Call
' For some poor service ; let me prove
' To you, or him here whom you love,

'My duty. Any solemn task,
'For life's whole course, is all I ask !'
Then she must surely have wept too,
And said, 'My friend, what can you do ?'
And I should have replied, 'I'll pray
'For you and him three times a-day,
'And, all day, morning, noon, and night,
'My life shall be so high and right
'That never Saint yet scaled the stairs
'Of heaven with more availing prayers !'
But this (and, as good God shall bless
Somehow my end, I'll do no less,)
I had no right to speak. Oh, shame,
So rich a love, so poor a claim !
My Mother, now my only friend,
Farewell. The school-books which you send
I shall not want, and so return.
Give them away, or sell, or burn.
I'll write from Malta. Would I might
But be your little Child to-night,
And feel your arms about me fold,
Against this loneliness and cold !

VI

FROM MRS. GRAHAM

The folly of young girls ! They doff
Their pride to smooth success, and scoff
At far more noble fire and might
That woo them from the dust of fight !

But, Frederick, now the storm is past,
Your sky should not remain o'ercast.
A sea-life's dull, and, oh, beware
Of nourishing, for zest, despair.
My Child, remember, you have twice
Heartily loved ; then why not thrice,
Or ten times ? But a wise man shuns
To cry ' All's over ', more than once.
I'll not say that a young man's soul
Is scarcely measure of the whole
Earthly and heavenly universe,
To which he inveterately prefers
The one beloved woman. Best
Speak to the senses' interest,
Which brooks no mystery nor delay :
Frankly reflect, my Son, and say,
Was there no secret hour, of those
Pass'd at her side in Sarum Close,
When, to your spirit's sick alarm,
It seem'd that all her marvellous charm

Was marvellously fled? Her grace
Of voice, adornment, movement, face
Was what already heart and eye
Had pondered to satiety;
And so the good of life was o'er,
Until some laugh not heard before,
Some novel fashion in her hair,
Or style of putting back her chair,
Restored the heavens. Gather thence
The loss-consoling inference.

Yet blame not beauty, which beguiles,
With lovely motions and sweet smiles,
Which while they please us pass away,
The spirit to lofty thoughts that stay
And lift the whole of after-life,
Unless you take the vision to wife,
Which then seems lost, or serves to slake
Desire, as when a lovely lake
Far off scarce fills the exulting eye
Of one athirst, who comes thereby,
And inappreciably sips
The deep, with disappointed lips.
To fail is sorrow, yet confess
That love pays dearly for success!
No blame to beauty! Let's complain
Of the heart, which can so ill sustain
Delight. Our griefs declare our fall,
But how much more our joys! They pall
With plucking, and celestial mirth
Can find no footing on the earth,
More than the bird of paradise
Which only lives the while it flies.

Think, also, how 'twould suit your pride
To have this woman for a bride.
Whate'er her faults, she's one of those
To whom the world's last polish owes
A novel grace, which all who aspire
To courtliest custom must acquire.
The world's the sphere she's made to charm,
Which you have shunn'd as if 'twere harm.
Oh, law perverse, that loneliness
Breeds love, society success !
Though young, 'twere now o'er late in life
To train yourself for such a wife ;
So she would suit herself to you,
As women, when they marry, do.
For, since 'tis for our dignity
Our lords should sit like lords on high,
We willingly deteriorate
To a step below our rulers' state ;
And 'tis the commonest of things
To see an angel, gay with wings,
Lean weakly on a mortal's arm !
Honoraria would put off the charm
Of lofty grace that caught your love,
For fear you should not seem above
Herself in fashion and degree,
As in true merit. Thus, you see,
'Twere little kindness, wisdom none,
To light your cot with such a sun.

VII
FROM FREDERICK

Write not, my Mother, her dear name
With the least word or hint of blame.
Who else shall discommend her choice,
I giving it my hearty voice?
Wed me? Ah, never near her come
The knowledge of the narrow home!
Far fly from her dear face, that shows
The sunshine lovelier than the rose,
The sordid gravity they wear
Who poverty's base burthen bear!
(And all are poor who come to miss
Their custom, though a crown be this.)
My hope was, that the wheels of fate,
For my exceeding need, might wait,
And she, unseen amidst all eyes,
Move sightless, till I sought the prize,
With honour, in an equal field.
But then came Vaughan, to whom I yield
With grace as much as any man,
In such cause, to another can.
Had she been mine, it seems to me
That I had that integrity
And only joy in her delight—
But each is his own favourite

In love ! The thought to bring me rest
Is that of us she takes the best.

'Twas but to see him to be sure
That choice for her remain'd no more !
His brow, so gaily clear of craft ;
His wit, the timely truth that laugh'd
To find itself so well express'd ;
His words, abundant yet the best ;
His spirit, of such handsome show
You mark'd not that his looks were so ;
His bearing, prospects, birth, all these
Might well, with small suit, greatly please ;
How greatly, when she saw arise
The reflex sweetness of her eyes
In his, and every breath defer
Humbly its bated life to her ;
Whilst power and kindness of command,
Which women can no more withstand
Than we their grace, were still unquell'd,
And force and flattery both compell'd
Her softness ! Say I'm worthy. I
Grew, in her presence, cold and shy.
It awed me, as an angel's might
In raiment of reproachful light.
Her gay looks told my sombre mood
That what's not happy is not good ;
And, just because 'twas life to please,
Death to repel her, truth and ease
Deserted me ; I strove to talk,
And stammer'd foolishness ; my walk
Was like a drunkard's ; if she took
My arm, it stiffen'd, ached, and shook ;

A likely wooer ! Blame her not ;
Nor ever say, dear Mother, aught
Against that perfectness which is
My strength, as once it was my bliss.

And do not chafe at social rules.
Leave that to charlatans and fools.
Clay graffs and clods conceive the rose,
So base still fathers best. Life owes
Itself to bread ; enough thereof
And easy days condition love ;
And, kindly train'd, love's roses thrive,
No more pale, scentless petals five,
Which moisten the considerate eye
To see what haste they make to die,
But heavens of colour and perfume,
Which, month by month, renew the bloom
Of art-born graces, when the year
In all the natural grove is sere.

Blame nought then ! Bright let be the air
About my lonely cloud of care.

VIII
FROM FREDERICK

Religion, duty, books, work, friends,—
'Tis good advice, but there it ends.
I'm sick for what these have not got.
Send no more books : they help me not ;
I do my work : the void's there still
Which carefullest duty cannot fill.
What though the inaugural hour of right
Comes ever with a keen delight ?
Little relieves the labour's heat ;
Disgust oft crowns it when complete ;
And life, in fact, is not less dull
For being very dutiful.
'The stately homes of England,' lo,
'How beautiful they stand !' They owe
How much to nameless things like me
Their beauty of security !
But who can long a low toil mend
By looking to a lofty end ?
And let me, since 'tis truth, confess
The void's not fill'd by godliness.
God is a tower without a stair,
And His perfection, love's despair.
'Tis He shall judge me when I die ;
He suckles with the hissing fly

The spider ; gazes calmly down,
Whilst rapine grips the helpless town.
His vast love holds all this and more.
In consternation I adore.

Nor can I ease this aching gulf
With friends, the pictures of myself.

Then marvel not that I recur
From each and all of these to her.
For more of heaven than her have I
No sensitive capacity.
Had I but her, ah, what the gain
Of owning aught but that domain !
Nay, heaven's extent, however much,
Cannot be more than many such ;
And, she being mine, should God to me
Say ' Lo ! my Child, I give to thee
All heaven besides ', what could I then,
But, as a child, to Him complain
That whereas my dear Father gave
A little space for me to have
In His great garden, now, o'erblest,
I've that, indeed, but all the rest,
Which, somehow, makes it seem I've got
All but my only cared-for plot.
Enough was that for my weak hand
To tend, my heart to understand.

Oh, the sick fact, 'twixt her and me
There's naught, and half a world of sea.

IX
FROM FREDERICK

In two, in less than two hours more
I set my foot on English shore,
Two years untrod, and, strange to tell,
Nigh miss'd through last night's storm ! There fell
A man from the shrouds, that roar'd to quench
Even the billows' blast and drench.
Besides me none was near to mark
His loud cry in the louder dark,
Dark, save when lightning show'd the deeps
Standing about in stony heaps.
No time for choice ! A rope ; a flash
That flamed as he rose ; a dizzy splash ;
A strange, inopportune delight
Of mounting with the billowy might,
And falling, with a thrill again
Of pleasure shot from feet to brain ;
And both paced deck, ere any knew
Our peril. Round us press'd the crew,
With wonder in the eyes of most.
As if the man who had loved and lost
Honorias dared no more than that !

My days have else been stale and flat.
This life's at best, if justly scann'd,
A tedious walk by the other's strand,

With, here and there cast up, a piece
Of coral or of ambergris,
Which, boasted of abroad, we ignore
The burden of the barren shore.
I seldom write, for 'twould be still
Of how the nerves refuse to thrill ;
How, throughout doubly-darken'd days,
I cannot recollect her face ;
How to my heart her name to tell
Is beating on a broken bell ;
And, to fill up the abhorrent gulf,
Scarce loving her, I hate myself.

Yet, latterly, with strange delight,
Rich tides have risen in the night,
And sweet dreams chased the fancies dense
Of waking life's dull somnolence.
I see her as I knew her, grace
Already glory in her face ;
I move about, I cannot rest,
For the proud brain and joyful breast
I have of her. Or else I float,
The pilot of an idle boat,
Alone, alone with sky and sea,
And her, the third simplicity.
Or Mildred, to some question, cries,
(Her merry meaning in her eyes,)
'The Ball, oh, Frederick will go ;
'Honorina will be there !' and, lo,
As moisture sweet my seeing blurs
To hear my name so link'd with hers,
A mirror joins, by guilty chance,
Either's averted, watchful glance !

Or with me, in the Ball-Room's blaze,
Her brilliant mildness thrids the maze ;
Our thoughts are lovely, and each word
Is music in the music heard,
And all things seem but parts to be
Of one persistent harmony.
By which I'm made divinely bold ;
The secret, which she knows, is told ;
And, laughing with a lofty bliss
Of innocent accord, we kiss ;
About her neck my pleasure weeps ;
Against my lip the silk vein leaps ;
Then says an Angel, ' Day or night,
' If yours you seek, not her delight,
' Although by some strange witchery
' It seems you kiss her, 'tis not she ;
' But, whilst you languish at the side
' Of a fair-foul phantasmal bride,
' Surely a dragon and strong tower
' Guard the true lady in her bower.'
And I say, ' Dear my Lord, Amen !'
And the true lady kiss again.
Or else some wasteful malady
Devours her shape and dims her eye ;
No charms are left, where all were rife,
Except her voice, which is her life,
Wherewith she, for her foolish fear,
Says trembling, ' Do you love me, Dear ?'
And I reply, ' Sweetest, I vow
' I never loved but half till now.'
She turns her face to the wall at this,
And says, ' Go, Love, 'tis too much bliss.

And then a sudden pulse is sent
About the sounding firmament
In smittings as of silver bars ;
The bright disorder of the stars
Is solved by music ; far and near,
Through infinite distinctions clear,
Their twofold voices' deeper tone
Utters the Name which all things own,
And each ecstatic treble dwells
On one whereof none other tells ;
And we, sublimed to song and fire,
Take order in the wheeling quire,
Till from the throbbing sphere I start,
Waked by the heaving of my heart.

Such dreams as these come night by night,
Disturbing day with their delight.
Portend they nothing? Who can tell !
God yet may do some miracle.
'Tis nigh two years, and she's not wed,
Or you would know ! He may be dead,
Or mad, and loving some one else,
And she, much moved that nothing quells
My constancy, or, simply wroth
With such a wretch, accept my troth
To spite him ; or her beauty's gone,
(And that's my dream !) and this man Vaughan
Takes her release : or tongues malign,
Confusing every ear but mine,
Have smirch'd her : ah, 'twould move her, sure,
To find I loved her all the more !
Nay, now I think, haply amiss
I read her words and looks, and his,

That night ! Did not his jealousy
Show—Good my God, and can it be
That I, a modest fool, all blest,
Nothing of such a heaven guess'd ?
Oh, chance too frail, yet frantic sweet,
To-morrow sees me at her feet !

Yonder, at last, the glad sea roars
Along the sacred English shores !
There lies the lovely land I know,
Where men and women lordliest grow ;
There peep the roofs where more than kings
Postpone state cares to country things,
And many a gay queen simply tends
The babes on whom the world depends ;
There curls the wanton cottage smoke
Of him that drives but bears no yoke ;
There laughs the realm where low and high
Are lieges to society,
And life has all too wide a scope,
Too free a prospect for its hope,
For any private good or ill,
Except dishonour, quite to fill !¹

—Mother, since this was penn'd, I've read
That ' Mr. Vaughan, on Tuesday, wed
' The beautiful Miss Churchill.' So
That's over ; and to-morrow I go
To take up my new post on board
The Wolf, my peace at last restored ;
My lonely faith, like heart-of-oak,
Shock-season'd. Grief is now the cloak

¹ Written in 1856.

I clasp about me to prevent
The deadly chill of a content
With any near or distant good,
Except the exact beatitude
Which love has shown to my desire.
Talk not of 'other joys and higher',
I hate and disavow all bliss
As none for me which is not this.
Think not I blasphemously cope
With God's decrees, and cast off hope.
How, when, and where can mine succeed?
I'll trust He knows who made my need.

Baseness of men ! Pursuit being o'er,
Doubtless her Husband feels no more
The heaven of heavens of such a Bride,
But, lounging, lets her please his pride
With fondness, guerdons her caress
With little names, and turns a tress
Round idle fingers. If 'tis so,
Why then I'm happier of the two !
Better, for lofty loss, high pain,
Than low content with lofty gain.
Poor, foolish Dove, to trust from me
Her happiness and dignity !

X

FROM FREDERICK

I thought the worst had brought me balm :
'Twas but the tempest's central calm.
Vague sinkings of the heart aver
That dreadful wrong is come to her,
And o'er this dream I brood and dote,
And learn its agonies by rote.
As if I loved it, early and late
I make familiar with my fate,
And feed, with fascinated will,
On very dregs of finish'd ill.
I think, she's near him now, alone,
With wardship and protection none ;
Alone, perhaps, in the hindering stress
Of airs that clasp him with her dress,
They wander whispering by the wave ;
And haply now, in some sea-cave,
Where the ribb'd sand is rarely trod,
They laugh, they kiss. Oh, God ! oh, God !
There comes a smile acutely sweet
Out of the picturing dark ; I meet
The ancient frankness of her gaze,
That soft and heart-surprising blaze
Of great goodwill and innocence,
And perfect joy proceeding thence !

Ah ! made for earth's delight, yet such
The mid-sea air's too gross to touch.
At thought of which, the soul in me
Is as the bird that bites a bee,
And darts abroad on frantic wing,
Tasting the honey and the sting ;
And, moaning where all round me sleep
Amidst the moaning of the deep,
I start at midnight from my bed—
And have no right to strike him dead.

What world is this that I am in,
Where chance turns sanctity to sin !
'Tis crime henceforward to desire
The only good ; the sacred fire
That sunn'd the universe is hell !
I hear a Voice which argues well :
'The Heaven hard has scorn'd your cry ;
'Fall down and worship me, and I
'Will give you peace ; go and profane
'This pangful love, so pure, so vain,
'And thereby win forgetfulness
'And pardon of the spirit's excess,
'Which soar'd too nigh that jealous Heaven
'Ever, save thus, to be forgiven.
'No Gospel has come down that cures
'With better gain a loss like yours.
'Be pious ! Give the beggar pelf,
'And love your neighbour as yourself !
'You, who yet love, though all is o'er,
'And she'll ne'er be your neighbour more,
'With soul which can in pity smile
'That aught with such a measure vile

'As self should be at all named "love !"
'Your sanctity the priests reprove ;
'Your case of grief they wholly miss ;
'The Man of Sorrows names not this.
'The years, they say, graff love divine
'On the lopp'd stock of love like thine ;
'The wild tree dies not, but converts.
'So be it ; but the lopping hurts,
'The graff takes tardily ! Men stanch
'Meantime with carth the bleeding branch.
'There's nothing heals one woman's loss,
'And lightens life's eternal cross
'With intermission of sound rest,
'Like lying in another's breast.
'The cure is, to your thinking, low !
'Is not life all, henceforward, so ?'

Ill Voice, at least thou calm'st my mood.
I'll sleep ! But, as I thus conclude,
The intrusions of her grace dispel
The comfortable glooms of hell.

A wonder ! Ere these lines were dried,
Vaughan and my Love, his three-days' Bride,
Became my guests. I look'd, and, lo,
In beauty soft as is the snow
And powerful as the avalanche,
She lit the deck. The Heav'n-sent chance !
She smiled, surprised. They came to see
The ship, not thinking to meet me.

At infinite distance she's my day :
What then to him ? Howbeit they say
'Tis not so sunny in the sun
But men might live cool lives thereon !

All's well ; for I have seen arise
That reflex sweetness of her eyes
In his, and watch'd his breath defer
Humbly its bated life to her,
His *wife*. My Love, she's safe in his
Devotion ! What ask'd I but this ?

They bade adieu ; I saw them go
Across the sea ; and now I know
The ultimate hope I rested on,
The hope beyond the grave, is gone,
The hope that, in the heavens high,
At last it should appear that I
Loved most, and so, by claim divine,
Should have her, in the heavens, for mine,
According to such nuptial sort
As may subsist in the holy court,
Where, if there are all kinds of joys
To exhaust the multitude of choice
In many mansions, then there are
Loves personal and particular,
Conspicuous in the glorious sky
Of universal charity,
As Phosphor in the sunrise. Now
I've seen them, I believe their vow
Immortal ; and the dreadful thought,
That he less honour'd than he ought
Her sanctity, is laid to rest,
And, blessing them, I too am blest.
My goodwill, as a springing air,
Unclouds a beauty in despair ;
I stand beneath the sky's pure cope
Unburthen'd even by a hope ;

And peace unspeakable, a joy
Which hope would deaden and destroy,
Like sunshine fills the airy gulf
Left by the vanishing of self.
That I have known her ; that she moves
Somewhere all-graceful ; that she loves,
And is belov'd, and that she's so
Most happy, and to heaven will go,
Where I may meet with her, (yet this
I count but accidental bliss,)
And that the full, celestial weal
Of all shall sensitively feel
The partnership and work of each,
And thus my love and labour reach
Her region, there the more to bless
Her last, consummate happiness,
Is guerdon up to the degree
Of that alone true loyalty
Which, sacrificing, is not nice
About the terms of sacrifice,
But offers all, with smiles that say,
'Tis little, but it is for aye !

XI

FROM MRS. GRAHAM

You wanted her, my Son, for wife,
With the fierce need of life in life.
That nobler passion of an hour
Was rather prophecy than power ;
And nature, from such stress unbent,
Rekurs to deep discouragement.
Trust not such peace yet ; easy breath,
In hot diseases, argues death ;
And tastelessness within the mouth
Worse fever shows than heat or drouth.
Wherefore take, Frederick, timely fear
Against a different danger near :
Wed not one woman, oh, my Child,
Because another has not smiled !
Oft, with a disappointed man,
The first who cares to win him can ;
For, after love's heroic strain,
Which tired the heart and brought no gain,
He feels consoled, relieved, and eased
To meet with her who can be pleased
To proffer kindness, and compute
His acquiescence for pursuit ;
Who troubles not his lonely mood ;
And asks for love mere gratitude.
Ah, desperate folly ! Yet, we know,
Who wed through love wed mostly so.

At least, my Son, when wed you do,
See that the woman equals you,
Nor rush, from having loved too high,
Into a worse humility.
A poor estate's a foolish plea
For marrying to a base degree.
A woman grown cannot be train'd,
Or, if she could, no love were gain'd ;
For never was a man's heart caught
By graces he himself had taught.
And fancy not 'tis in the might
Of man to do without delight ;
For, should you in her nothing find
To exhilarate the higher mind,
Your soul would deaden useless wings
With wickedness of lawful things,
And vampire pleasure swift destroy
Even the memory of joy.
So let no man, in desperate mood,
Wed a dull girl because she's good.
All virtues in his wife soon dim,
Except the power of pleasing him,
Which may small virtue be, or none !
I know my just and tender Son,
To whom the dangerous grace is given
That scorns a good which is not heaven ;
My Child, who used to sit and sigh
Under the bright, ideal sky,
And pass, to spare the farmer's wheat,
The poppy and the meadow-sweet !
He would not let his wife's heart ache
For what was mainly his mistake ;

But, having err'd so, all his force
Would fix upon the hard, right course.

She's graceless, say, yet good and true,
And therefore inly fair, and, through
The veils which inward beauty fold,
Faith can her loveliness behold.

Ah, that's soon tired ; faith falls away
Without the ceremonial stay
Of outward loveliness and awe.

The weightier matters of the law
She pays : mere mint and cumin not ;
And, in the road that she was taught,
She treads, and takes for granted still
Nature's immedicable ill ;

So never wears within her eyes
A false report of paradise,
Nor ever modulates her mirth
With vain compassion of the earth,
Which made a certain happier face
Affecting, and a gayer grace
With pathos delicately edged !
Yet, though she be not privileged
To unlock for you your heart's delight,
(Her keys being gold, but not the right,)
On lower levels she may do !

Her joy is more in loving you
Than being loved, and she commands
All tenderness she understands.
It is but when you proffer more
The yoke weighs heavy and chafes sore.
It's weary work enforcing love
On one who has enough thereof,

And honour on the lowlihead
Of ignorance ! Besides, you dread,
In Leah's arms, to meet the eyes
Of Rachel, somewhere in the skies,
And both return, alike relieved,
To life less loftily conceived.
Alas, alas !

Then wait the mood
In which a woman may be woo'd
Whose thoughts and habits are too high
For honour to be flattery,
And who would surely not allow
The suit that you could proffer now.
Her equal yoke would sit with ease ;
It might, with wearing, even please,
(Not with a better word to move
The loyal wrath of present love) ;
She would not mope when you were gay,
For want of knowing aught to say ;
Nor vex you with unhandsome waste
Of thoughts ill-timed and words ill-placed ;
Nor reckon small things duties small,
And your fine sense fantastical ;
Nor would she bring you up a brood
Of strangers bound to you by blood,
Boys of a meaner moral race,
Girls with their mother's evil grace,
But not her chance to sometimes find
Her critic past his judgment kind ;
Nor, unaccustom'd to respect,
Which men, where 'tis not claim'd, neglect,

Confirm you selfish and morose,
And slowly, by contagion, gross ;
But, glad and able to receive
The honour you would long to give,
Would hasten on to justify
Expectancy, however high,
Whilst you would happily incur
Compulsion to keep up with her.

XII

FROM FREDERICK

Your letter, Mother, bears the date
Of six months back, and comes too late.
My Love, past all conceiving lost,
A change seem'd good, at any cost,
From lonely, stupid, silent grief,
Vain, objectless, beyond relief,
And, like a sea-fog, settled dense
On fancy, feeling, thought, and sense.
I grew so idle, so despised
Myself, my powers, by Her unprized,
Honouring my post, but nothing more,
And lying, when I lived on shore,
So late of mornings : weak tears stream'd
For such slight cause,—if only gleam'd,
Remotely, beautifully bright,
On clouded eves at sea, the light
Of English headlands in the sun,—
That soon I deem'd 'twere better done
To lay this poor, complaining wraith
Of unreciprocated faith :
And so, with heart still bleeding quick,
But strengthen'd by the comfort sick
Of knowing that *She* could not care,
I turn'd away from my despair,

And, trust me, Mother, I and Jane,
We suit each other well. My gain
Is very great in this good Wife,
To whom I'm bound, for natural life,
By hearty faith, yet crossing not
My faith towards—I know not what !
As to the ether is the air,
Is her good to Honoria's fair ;
One place is full of both, yet each
Lies quite beyond the other's reach
And recognition.

If you say,
Am I contented? Yea and nay!
For what's base but content to grow
With less good than the best we know?
But think me not from life withdrawn,
By passion for a hope that's gone,
So far as to forget how much
A woman is, as merely such,
To man's affection. What is best,
In each, belongs to all the best;

And though, in marriage, quite to kiss
And half to love the custom is,
'Tis such dishonour, ruin bare,
The soul's interior despair,
And life between two troubles toss'd,
To me, who think not with the most ;
Whatever 'twould have been, before
My Cousin's time, 'tis now so sore
A treason to the abiding throne
Of that sweet love which I have known,
I cannot live so, and I bend
My mind perforce to comprehend
That He who gives command to love
Does not require a thing above
The strength He gives. The highest degree
Of the hardest grace, humility ;
The step t'ward heaven the latest trod,
And that which makes us most like God,
And us much more than God behoves,
Is, to be humble in our loves.
Henceforth for ever therefore I
Renounce all partiality
Of passion. Subject to control
Of that perspective of the soul
Which God Himself pronounces good,
Confirming claims of neighbourhood,
And giving man, for earthly life,
The closest neighbour in a wife,
I'll serve all. Jane be much more dear
Than all as she is much more near !
I'll love her ! Yea, and love's joy comes
Ever from self-love's martyrdoms !

Yet, not to lie for God, 'tis true
That 'twas another joy I knew
When freighted was my heart with fire
Of fond, irrational desire
For fascinating, female charms,
And hopeless heaven in Her mild arms.
Nor wrong I any, if I profess
That care for heaven with me were less
But that I'm utterly imbued
With faith of all Earth's hope renew'd
In realms where no short-coming pains
Expectance, and dear love disdains
Time's treason, and the gathering dross,
And lasts for ever in the gloss
Of newness.

 All the bright past seems,
Now, but a splendour in my dreams,
Which shows, albeit the dreamer wakes,
The standard of right life. Life aches
To be therewith conform'd ; but, oh,
The world's so stolid, dark, and low !
That and the mortal element
Forbid the beautiful intent,
And, like the unborn butterfly,
It feels the wings, and wants the sky.

But perilous is the lofty mood
Which cannot yoke with lowly good.
Right life, for me, is life that wends
By lowly ways to lofty ends.
I well perceive, at length, that haste
T'ward heaven itself is only waste ;

And thus I dread the impatient spur
Of aught that speaks too plain of Her.
There's little here that story tells ;
But music talks of nothing else.
Therefore, when music breathes, I say,
(And urge my task,) Away, away !
Thou art the voice of one I knew,
But what thou say'st is not yet true ;
Thou art the voice of her I loved,
And I would not be vainly moved.

So that which did from death set free
All things, now dons death's mockery,
And takes its place with things that are
But little noted. Do not mar
For me your peace ! My health is high.
The proud possession of mine eye
Departed, I am much like one
Who had by haughty custom grown
To think gilt rooms, and spacious grounds,
Horses, and carriages, and hounds,
Fine linen, and an eider bed
As much his need as daily bread,
And honour of men as much or more.
Till, strange misfortune smiting sore,
His pride all goes to pay his debts,
A lodging anywhere he gets,
And takes his family thereto
Weeping, and other relics few,
Allow'd, by them that seize his self,
As precious only to himself.
Yet the sun shines ; the country green
Has many riches, poorly seen

From blazon'd coaches ; grace at meat
Goes well with thrift in what they eat ;
And there's amends for much bereft
In better thanks for much that's left !

Jane is not fair, yet pleases well
The eye in which no others dwell ;
And features somewhat plainly set
And homely manners leave her yet
The crowning boon and most express
Of Heaven's inventive tenderness,
A woman. But I do her wrong,
Letting the world's eyes guide my tongue !
She has a handsomeness that pays
No homage to the hourly gaze,
And dwells not on the arch'd brow's height
And lids which softly lodge the light,
Nor in the pure field of the cheek
Flow'rs, though the soul be still to seek ;
But shows as fits that solemn place
Whereof the window is the face :
Blankness and leaden outlines mark
What time the Church within is dark ;
Yet view it on a Festal night,
Or some occasion else for light,
And each ungainly line is seen
A special character to mean
Of Saint or Prophet, and the whole
Blank window is a living scroll.

For hours, the clock upon the shelf,
Has all the talking to itself ;
But to and fro her needle runs
Twice, while the clock is ticking once ;

And, when a wife is well in reach,
Not silence separates, but speech ;
And I, contented, read, or smoke,
And idly think, or idly stroke
The winking cat, or watch the fire,
In social peace that does not tire ;
Until, at easeful end of day,
She moves, and puts her work away,
And, saying ' How cold 'tis', or ' How warm',
Or something else as little harm,
Comes, used to finding, kindly press'd,
A woman's welcome to my breast,
With all the great advantage clear
Of none else having been so near.

But sometimes, (how shall I deny !)
There falls, with her thus fondly by,
Dejection, and a chilling shade.
Remember'd pleasures, as they fade,
Salute me, and colossal grow,
Like foot-prints in the thawing snow.
I feel oppress'd beyond my force
With foolish envy and remorse.
I love this woman, but I might
Have loved some else with more delight ;
And strange it seems of God that he
Should make a vain capacity.

Such times of ignorant relapse,
'Tis well she does not talk, perhaps.
The dream, the discontent, the doubt,
To some injustice flaming out,
Were't else, might leave us both to moan
A kind tradition overthrown,

And dawning promise once more dead
In the pernicious lowlihead
Of not aspiring to be fair.
And what am I, that I should dare
Dispute with God, who moulds one clay
To honour and shame, and wills to pay
With equal wages them that delve
About his vines one hour or twelve !

XIII

FROM LADY CLITHEROE TO MARY CHURCHILL

I've dreadful news, my Sister dear !
Frederick has married, as we hear,
Oh, *such* a girl ! This fact we get
From Mr. Barton, whom we met
At Abury once. He used to know,
At Race and Hunt, Lord Clitheroe,
And writes that he 'has seen Fred Graham,
'Commander of the Wolf—the same
'The Mess call'd Joseph—with his Wife
'Under his arm.' He 'lays his life,
'The fellow married her for love,
'For there was nothing else to move.
'H is her Shibboleth. 'Tis said
'Her Mother was a Kitchen-Maid.'

Poor Fred ! What *will* Honoria say ?
She thought so highly of him. Pray
Tell it her gently. I've no right,
I know you hold, to trust my sight ;
But Frederick's state could not be hid !
And Felix, coming when he did,
Was lucky ; for Honoria, too,
Was half in love. How warm she grew
On 'worldliness', when once I said
I fancied that, in ladies, Fred

Had tastes much better than his means !
His hand was worthy of a Queen's,
Said she, and actually shed tears
The night he left us for two years,
And sobb'd, when ask'd the cause to tell,
That ' Frederick look'd so miserable.'
He *did* look very dull, no doubt,
But such things girls don't cry about.

What weathercocks men always prove !
You're quite right not to fall in love.
I never did, and, truth to tell,
I don't think it respectable.
The man can't understand it, too.
He likes to be in love with you,
But scarce knows how, if you love him,
Poor fellow. When 'tis woman's whim
To serve her husband night and day,
The kind soul let's her have her way !
So, if you wed, as soon you should,
Be selfish for your husband's good.
Happy the men who relegate
Their pleasures, vanities, and state,
To *us*. Their nature seems to be
To enjoy themselves by deputy,
For, seeking their own benefit,
Dear, what a mess they make of it !
A man will work his bones away,
If but his wife will only play ;
He does not mind how much he's teased,
So that his plague looks always pleased ;
And never thanks her, while he lives,
For anything, but what he gives !

'Tis hard to manage men, we hear !
Believe me, nothing's easier, Dear.
The most important step by far
Is finding what their colours are.
The next is, not to let them know
The reason why they love us so.
The indolent droop of a blue shawl,
Or gray silk's fluctuating fall,
Covers the multitude of sins
In me. *Your* husband, Love, might wince
At azure, and be wild at slate,
And yet do well with chocolate.
Of course you'd let him fancy he
Adored you for your piety.

XIV

FROM JANE TO HER MOTHER

Dear Mother, as you write, I see
How glad and thankful I should be
For such a husband. Yet to tell
The truth, I am so miserable !
How could he—I remember, though,
He never said he loved me ! No,
He is so right that all seems wrong
I've done and thought my whole life long !
I'm grown so dull and dead with fear
That Yes and No, when he is near,
Is all I have to say. He's quite
Unlike what most would call polite,
And yet, when first I saw him come
To tea in Aunt's fine drawing-room,
He made me feel so common ! Oh,
How dreadful if he thinks me so !
It's no use trying to behave
To him. His eye, so kind and grave,
Sees through and through me ! Could not you,
Without his knowing that I knew,
Ask him to scold me now and then ?
Mother, it's such a weary strain
The way he has of treating me
As if 'twas something fine to be

A woman ; and appearing not
 To notice any faults I've got !
 I know he knows I'm plain, and small,
 Stupid, and ignorant, and all
 Awkward and mean ; and, by degrees,
 I see a beauty which he sees,
 When often he looks strange awhile,
 Then recollects me with a smile.

I wish he had that fancied Wife,
 With me for Maid, now ! all my life
 To dress her out for him, and make
 Her looks the lovelier for his sake ;
 To have her rate me till I cried ;
 Then see her seated by his side,
 And driven off proudly to the Ball ;
 Then to stay up for her, whilst all
 The servants were asleep ; and hear
 At dawn the carriage rolling near,
 And let them in ; and hear her laugh,
 And boast, he said that none was half
 So beautiful, and that the Queen,
 Who danced with him the first, had seen
 And noticed her, and ask'd who was
 That lady in the golden gauze ?
 And then to go to bed, and lie
 In a sort of heavenly jealousy,
 Until 'twas broad day, and I guess'd
 She slept, nor knew how she was bless'd.

Pray burn this letter. I would not
 Complain, but for the fear I've got
 Of going wild, as we hear tell
 Of people shut up in a cell,

With no one there to talk to. He,
Must never know he is loved by me
The most ; he'd think himself to blame ;
And I should almost die for shame.

If being good would serve instead
Of being graceful, ah, then, Fred—
But I, myself, I never could
See what's in women's being good ;
For all their goodness is to do
Just what their nature tells them to.
Now, when a man would do what's right,
He has to try with all his might.

Though true and kind in deed and word,
Fred's not a vessel of the Lord.
But I have hopes of him ; for, oh,
How can we ever surely know
But that the very darkest place
May be the scene of saving grace !

XV

FROM FREDERICK

‘How did I feel?’ The little wight
Fill’d me, unfatherly, with fright !
So grim it gazed, and, out of the sky,
There came, minute, remote, the cry,
Piercing, of original pain.
I put the wonder back to Jane,
And her delight seem’d dash’d, that I,
Of strangers still by nature shy,
Was not familiar quite so soon
With her small friend of many a moon.
But, when the new-made Mother smiled,
She seem’d herself a little child,
Dwelling at large beyond the law
By which, till then, I judged and saw ;
And that fond glow which she felt stir
For it, suffused my heart for her ;
To whom, from the weak babe, and thence
To me, an influent innocence,
Happy, reparative of life,
Came, and she was indeed my wife,
As there, lovely with love she lay,
Brightly contented all the day
To hug her sleepy little boy,
In the reciprocated joy
Of touch, the childish sense of love,
Ever inquisitive to prove
Its strange possession, and to know
If the eye’s report be really so.

XVI

FROM JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM

Dear Mother,—such if you'll allow,
In *love*, not *law*, I'll call you now,—
I hope you're well. I write to say
Frederick has got, besides his pay,
A good appointment in the Docks ;
Also to thank you for the frocks
And shoes for Baby. I (D.V.)
Shall soon be strong. Fred goes to sea
No more. I *am* so glad ; because,
Though kinder husband never was,
He seems still kinder to become
The more he stays with me at home.
When we are parted, I see plain
He's dull till he gets used again
To marriage. Do not tell him, though ;
I would not have him know I know,
For all the world.

I try to mind
All your advice ; but sometimes find
I do not well see how. I thought
To take it about dress ; so bought
A gay new bonnet, gown, and shawl ;
But Frederick was not pleased at all ;
For, though he smiled, and said, ' How smart !'
I feel, you know, what's in his heart.

But I shall learn ! I fancied long
That care in dress was very wrong,
Till Frederick, in his startling way,
When I began to blame, one day,
The Admiral's Wife, because we hear
She spends two hours, or something near,
In dressing, took her part, and said
How all things deck themselves that wed ;
How birds and plants grow fine to please
Each other in their marriages ;
And how (which certainly is true—
It never struck me—did it you ?)
Dress was, at first, Heaven's ordinance,
And has much Scripture countenance.
For Eliezer, we are told,
Adorn'd with jewels and with gold
Rebecca. In the Psalms, again,
How the King's Daughter dress'd ! And, then,
The Good Wife in the Proverbs, she
Made herself clothes of tapestry,
Purple and silk : and there's much more
I had not thought about before !
But Fred's so clever ! Do you know,
Since Baby came, he loves me so !
I'm really useful, now, to Fred ;
And none could do so well instead.
It's nice to fancy, if I died,
He'd miss me from the Darling's side !
Also, there's something now, you see,
On which we talk, and quite agree ;
On which, without pride too, I can
Hope I'm as wise as any man.

I should be happy now, if quite
Sure that in *one* thing Fred was right.
But, though I trust his prayers are said,
Because he goes so late to bed,
I doubt his Calling. Glad to find
A text adapted to his mind—
That where St. Paul, in Man and Wife,
Allows a little worldly life—
He smiled, and said that he knew all
Such things as that without St. Paul !
And once he said, when I with pain
Had got him just to read Romaine,
'Men's creeds should not their hopes condemn.
'Who wait for heaven to come to them,
'Are little like to go to heaven,
'If logic's not the devil's leaven !'
I cried at such a wicked joke,
And he, surprised, went out to smoke.

But to judge him is not for me,
Who myself sin so dreadfully
As half to doubt if I should care
To go to heaven, and he not there.
He *must* be right ; and I dare say
I shall soon understand his way.
To other things, once strange, I've grown
Accustom'd, nay, to like. I own
'Twas long before I got well used
To sit, while Frederick read or mused
For hours, and scarcely spoke. When he,
For all that, held the door to me,
Pick'd up my handkerchief, and rose
To set my chair, with other shows

Of honour, such as men, 'tis true,
To sweethearts and fine ladies do,
It almost seem'd an unkind jest ;
But now I like these ways the best.
They somehow make me gentle and good ;
And I don't mind his quiet mood.
If Frederick *does* seem dull awhile,
There's Baby. You should see him smile !
I'm pretty and nice to him, sweet Pet,
And he will learn no better yet :
Indeed, now little Johnny makes
A busier time of it, and takes
Our thoughts off one another more,
I'm happy as need be, I'm sure !

XVII

FROM FELIX TO HONORIA

Let me, Beloved, while gratitude
Is garrulous with coming good,
Or ere the tongue of happiness
Be silenced by your soft caress,
Relate how, musing here of you,
The clouds, the intermediate blue,
The air that rings with larks, the grave
And distant rumour of the wave,
The solitary sailing skiff,
The gusty corn-field on the cliff,
The corn-flower by the crumbling ledge,
Or, far-down at the shingle's edge,
The sighing sea's recurrent crest
Breaking, resign'd to its unrest,
All whisper, to my home-sick thought,
Of charms in you till now uncaught,
Or only caught as dreams, to die
Ere they were own'd by memory.

High and ingenious Decree
Of joy-devising Deity !
You whose ambition only is
The assurance that you make my bliss,
(Hence my first debt of love to show,
That you, past showing, indeed do so !)
Trust me the world, the firmament,
With diverse-natured worlds besprent,
Were rear'd in no mere undivine
Boast of omnipotent design,

The lion differing from the snake
But for the trick of difference sake,
And comets darting to and fro
Because in circles planets go ;
But rather that sole love might be
Refresh'd throughout eternity
In one sweet faith, for ever strange,
Mirror'd by circumstantial change.
For, more and more, do I perceive
That everything is relative
To you, and that there's not a star,
Nor nothing in't, so strange or far,
But, if 'twere scanned, 'twould chiefly mean
Somewhat, till then, in you unseen,
Something to make the bondage strait
Of you and me more intimate,
Some unguess'd opportunity
Of nuptials in a new degree.

But, oh, with what a novel force
Your best-conn'd beauties, by remorse
Of absence, touch ; and, in my heart,
How bleeds afresh the youthful smart
Of passion fond, despairing still
To utter infinite good-will
By worthy service ! Yet I know
That love is all that love can owe,
And this to offer is no less
Of worth, in kind speech or caress,
Than if my life-blood I should give.
For good is God's prerogative,
And Love's deed is but to prepare
The flatter'd, dear Belov'd to dare

Acceptance of His gifts. When first
On me your happy beauty burst,
Honoriam, verily it seem'd
That naught beyond you could be dream'd
Of beauty and of heaven's delight.
Zeal of an unknown infinite
Yet bade me ever wish you more
Beatified than e'er before.
Angelical were your replies
To my prophetic flatteries ;
And sweet was the compulsion strong
That drew me in the course along
Of heaven's increasing bright allure,
With provocations fresh of your
Victorious capacity.
Whither may love, so fledged, not fly ?

Did not mere Earth hold fast the string
Of this celestial soaring thing,
So measure and make sensitive,
And still, to the nerves, nice notice give
Of each minutest increment
Of such interminable ascent,
The heart would lose all count, and beat
Unconscious of a height so sweet,
And the spirit-pursuing senses strain
Their steps on the starry track in vain !
But, reading now the note just come,
With news of you, the babes, and home,
I think, and say, ' To-morrow eve
' With kisses me will she receive ' ;
And, thinking, for extreme delight
Of love's extremes, I laugh outright.

XVIII
FROM FREDERICK

Eight wedding-days gone by, and none
Yet kept, to keep them all in one,
Jane and myself, with John and Grace
On donkeys, visited the place
I first drew breath in, Knatchley Wood.
Bearing the basket, stuff'd with food,
Milk, loaves, hard eggs, and marmalade,
I halted where the wandering glade
Divides the thicket. There I knew,
It seem'd, the very drops of dew
Below the unalter'd eglantine.
Nothing had changed since I was nine !
In the green desert, down to eat
We sat, our rustic grace at meat
Good appetite, through that long climb
Hungry two hours before the time.
And there Jane took her stitching out,
And John for birds'-nests pry'd about,
And Grace and Baby, in between
The warm blades of the breathing green,
Dodged grasshoppers ; and I no less,
In conscientious idleness,
Enjoy'd myself, under the noon
Stretch'd, and the sounds and sights of June
Receiving, with a drowsy charm,
Through muffled ear and folded arm.

And then, as if I sweetly dream'd,
I half-remember'd how it seem'd
When I, too, was a little child
About the wild wood roving wild.
Pure breezes from the far-off height
Melted the blindness from my sight,
Until, with rapture, grief, and awe,
I saw again as then I saw.
As then I saw, I saw again
The harvest-waggon in the lane,
With high-hung tokens of its pride
Left in the elms on either side ;
The daisies coming out at dawn
In constellations on the lawn ;
The glory of the daffodil ;
The three black windmills on the hill,
Whose magic arms, flung wildly by,
Sent magic shadows o'er the rye.
Within the leafy coppice, lo,
More wealth than miser's dreams could show,
The blackbird's warm and woolly brood,
Five golden beaks agape for food ;
The Gipsies, all the summer seen
Native as poppies to the Green ;
The winter, with its frosts and thaws
And opulence of hips and haws
The lovely marvel of the snow ;
The Tamar, with its altering show
Of gay ships sailing up and down,
Among the fields and by the Town ;
And, dearer far than anything,
Came back the songs you used to sing.

(Ah, might you sing such songs again,
And I, your child, but hear as then,
With conscious profit of the gulf
Flown over from my present self !)
And, as to men's retreating eyes,
Beyond high mountains higher rise,
Still farther back there shone to me
The dazzling dusk of infancy.
Thither I look'd, as, sick of night,
The Alpine shepherd looks to the height,
And does not see the day, 'tis true,
But sees the rosy tops that do.

Meantime Jane stitch'd, and fann'd the flies
From my repose, with hush'd replies
To Grace, and smiles when Baby fell.
Her countenance love visible
Appear'd, love audible her voice.
Why in the past alone rejoice,
Whilst here was wealth before me cast
Which, I could feel, if 'twere but past
Were then most precious? Question vain,
When ask'd again and yet again,
Year after year ; yet now, for no
Cause, but that heaven's bright winds will blow
Not at our pray'r but as they list,
It brought that distant, golden mist
To grace the hour, firing the deep
Of spirit and the drowsy keep
Of joy, till, spreading uncontain'd,
The holy power of seeing gain'd
The outward eye, this owning even
That where there's love and truth there's heaven.

Debtor to few, forgotten hours
Am I, that truths for me are powers.
Ah. happy hours, 'tis something yet
Not to forget that I forget !

And now a cloud, bright, huge, and calm,
Rose, doubtful if for bale or balm ;
O'ertoppling towers and bulwarks bright
Appear'd, at beck of viewless might,
Along a rifted mountain range.
Untraceable and swift in change,
Those glittering peaks, disrupted, spread
To solemn bulks, seen overhead
The sunshine quench'd, from one dark form
Fumed the appalling light of storm.
Straight to the zenith, black with bale,
The Gipsies' smoke rose deadly pale ;
And one wide night of hopeless hue
Hid from the heart the recent blue.
And soon, with thunder crackling loud,
A flash reveal'd the formless cloud :
Lone sailing rack, far wavering rim,
And billowy tracts of stormland dim.

We stood, safe group'd beneath a shed.
Grace hid behind Jane's gown for dread,
Who told her, fondling with her hair,
'The naughty noise ! but God took care
Of all good girls.' John seem'd to me
Too much for Jane's theology,
Who bade him watch the tempest. Now
A blast made all the woodland bow ;
Against the whirl of leaves and dust
Kine dropp'd their heads ; the tortured gust

Jagg'd and convuls'd the ascending smoke
To mockery of the lightning's stroke.
The blood prick'd, and a blinding flash
And close coinstantaneous crash
Humbled the soul, and the rain all round
Resilient dimm'd the whistling ground,
Nor flagg'd in force from first to last,
Till, sudden as it came, 'twas past,
Leaving a trouble in the copse
Of brawling birds and tinkling drops.

Change beyond hope ! Far thunder faint
Mutter'd its vast and vain complaint,
And gaps and fractures, fringed with light,
Show'd the sweet skies, with squadrons bright
Of cloudlets, glittering calm and fair
Through gulfs of calm and glittering air.

With this adventure, we return'd.
The roads the feet no longer burn'd.
A wholesome smell of rainy earth
Refresh'd our spirits, tired of mirth.
The donkey-boy drew friendly near
My Wife, and, touch'd by the kind cheer
Her countenance show'd, or sooth'd perchance
By the soft evening's sad advance,
As we were, stroked the flanks and head
Of the ass, and, somewhat thick-voiced, said,
'To 'ave to wop the donkeys so
'Ardens the 'art, but they won't go
'Without !' My Wife, by this impress'd,
As men judge poets by their best,
When now we reach'd the welcome door,
Gave him his hire, and sixpence more.

XIX
FROM JANE

Dear Mrs. Graham, the fever's past,
And Fred is well. I, in my last,
Forgot to say that, while 'twas on,
A lady, call'd Honoria Vaughan,
One of his Salisbury Cousins, came.
Had I, she ask'd me, heard her name?
'Twas that Honoria, no doubt,
Whom he would sometimes talk about
And speak to, when his nights were bad,
And so I told her that I had.

She look'd so beautiful and kind !
And just the sort of wife my mind
Pictured for Fred, with many tears,
In those sad early married years.

Visiting, yesterday, she said,
The Admiral's Wife, she learn'd that Fred
Was very ill ; she begg'd to be,
If possible, of use to me.
What could she do? Last year, his Aunt
Died, leaving her, who had no want,
Her fortune. Half was his, she thought ;
But he, she knew, would not be brought
To take his rights at second hand.
Yet something might, she hoped, be plann'd.

What did I think of putting John
To school and college? Mr. Vaughan,
When John was old enough, could give
Preferment to her relative ;
And she should be *so* pleased.—I said
I felt quite sure that dearest Fred
Would be most thankful. Would we come,
And make ourselves, she ask'd, at home,
Next month, at High-Hurst? Change of air
Both he and I should need, and there
At leisure we could talk, and then
Fix plans, as John was nearly ten.

It seemed so rude to think and doubt,
So I said, Yes. In going out,
She said, 'How strange of Frederick, Dear,'
(I wish he had been there to hear,)
'To send no cards, or tell me what
'A nice new Cousin I had got !'
Was not that kind?

When Fred grew strong,
I had, I found, done very wrong.
Anger was in his voice and eye.
With people born and bred so high
As Fred and Mrs. Vaughan and you,
It's hard to guess what's right to do ;
And he won't teach me !

Dear Fred wrote,
Directly, such a lovely note,
Which, though it undid all I had done,
Was, both to me and Mrs. Vaughan,
So kind ! His words, I can't say why,
Like soldiers' music, made me cry.

BOOK II

I

FROM JANE TO HER MOTHER

THANK Heaven, the burthens on the heart
Are not half known till they depart !
Although I long'd, for many a year,
To love with love that casts out fear,
My Frederick's kindness frighten'd me,
And heaven seem'd less far off than he ;
And in my fancy I would trace
A lady with an angel's face,
That made devotion simply debt,
Till sick with envy and regret,
And wicked grief that God should e'er
Make women, and not make them fair.
That he might love me more because
Another in his memory was,
And that my indigence might be
To him what Baby's was to me,
The chief of charms, who could have thought
But God's wise way is to give nought
Till we with asking it are tired ;
And when, indeed, the change desired
Comes, lest we give ourselves the praise,
It comes by Providence, not Grace ;

And mostly our thanks for granted pray'rs
 Are groans at unexpected cares.
 First Baby went to heaven, you know,
 And, five weeks after, Grace went, too.
 Then he became more talkative,
 And, stooping to my heart, would give
 Signs of his love, which pleased me more
 Than all the proofs he gave before ;
 And, in that time of our great grief,
 We talk'd religion for relief ;
 For, though we very seldom name
 Religion, we now think the same !
 Oh, what a bar is thus removed
 To loving and to being loved !
 For no agreement really is
 In anything when none's in this.
 Why, Mother, once, if Frederick press'd
 His wife against his hearty breast,
 The interior difference seem'd to tear
 My own, until I could not bear
 The trouble. 'Twas a dreadful strife,
 And show'd, indeed, that faith is life.
 He never felt this. If he did,
 I'm sure it could not have been hid ;
 For wives, I need not say to you,
 Can feel just what their husbands do,
 Without a word or look ; but then
 It is not so, you know, with men.

From that time many a Scripture text
 Help'd me, which had, before, perplex'd.
 Oh, what a wond'rous word seem'd this :
 He is my head, as Christ is his !

None ever could have dared to see
In marriage such a dignity
For man, and for his wife, still less,
Such happy, happy lowliness,
Had God himself not made it plain !
This revelation lays the rein—
If I may speak so—on the neck
Of a wife's love, takes thence the check
Of conscience, and forbids to doubt
Its measure is to be without
All measure, and a fond excess
Is here her rule of godliness.

I took him not for love but fright ;
He did but ask a dreadful right.
In this was love, that he loved me
The first, who was mere poverty.
All that I know of love he taught ;
And love is all I know of aught.
My merit is so small by his,
That my demerit is my bliss.
My life is hid with him in Christ,
Never thencefrom to be enticed ;
And in his strength have I such rest
As when the baby on my breast
Finds what it knows not how to seek,
And, very happy, very weak,
Lies, only knowing all is well,
Pillow'd on kindness palpable.

II

FROM LADY CLITHEROE TO MARY CHURCHILL

Dear Saint, I'm still at High-Hurst Park.
The house is fill'd with folks of mark.
Honor suits a good estate
Much better than I hoped. How fate
Loads her with happiness and pride !
And such a loving lord, beside !
But between us, Sweet, everything
Has limits, and to build a wing
To this old house, when Courtholm stands
Empty upon his Berkshire lands,
And all that Honor might be near
Papa, was buying love too dear.

With twenty others, there are two
Guests here, whose names will startle you :
Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Graham !
I thought he stay'd away for shame.
He and his wife were ask'd, you know,
And would not come, four years ago.
You recollect Miss Smythe found out
Who she had been, and all about
Her people at the Powder-mill ;
And how the fine Aunt tried to instil
Haut ton, and how at last poor Jane
Had got so shy and *gauche* that, when

The Dockyard gentry came to sup,
She always had to be lock'd up ;
And some one wrote to us and said
Her mother was a kitchen-maid.
Dear Mary, you'll be charm'd to know
It *must* be all a fib. But, oh,
She *is* the oddest little Pet
On which my eyes were ever set !
She's so *outrée* and natural
That, when she first arrived, we all
Wonder'd, as when a robin comes
In through the window to eat crumbs
At breakfast with us. She has sense,
Humility, and confidence ;
And, save in dressing just a thought
Gayer in colours than she ought,
(To-day she looks a cross between
Gipsy and Fairy, red and green,)
She always happens to do well.
And yet one never quite can tell
What she *might* do or utter next.
Lord Clitheroe is much perplex'd.
Her husband, every now and then,
Looks nervous ; all the other men
Are charm'd. Yet she has neither grace,
Nor one good feature in her face.
Her eyes, indeed, flame in her head,
Like very altar-fires to Fred,
Whose steps she follows everywhere
Like a tame duck, to the despair
Of Colonel Holmes, who does his part
To break her funny little heart.

Honor's enchanted. 'Tis her view
That people, if they're good and true,
And treated well, and let alone,
Will kindly take to what's their own,
And always be original,
Like children. Honor's just like all
The rest of us ! But, thinking so,
'Tis well she miss'd Lord Clitheroe,
Who hates originality,
Though he puts up with it in me.

Poor Mrs. Graham has never been
To the Opera ! You should have seen
The innocent way she told the Earl
She thought Plays sinful when a girl,
And now she never had a chance !
Frederick's complacent smile and glance
Towards her, show'd me, past a doubt,
Honor had been quite cut out.
'Tis very strange ; for Mrs. Graham,
Though Frederick's fancy none can blame,
Seems the last woman you'd have thought
Her lover would have ever sought.
She never reads, I find, nor goes
Anywhere ; so that I suppose
She got at all she ever knew
By growing up, as kittens do.

Talking of kittens, by-the-bye,
You have more influence than I
With dear Honor. Get her, Dear,
To be a little more severe
With those sweet Children. They've the run
Of all the place. When school was done,

Maud burst in, while the Earl was there,
With 'Oh, Mama, do be a bear !'

Do you know, Dear, this odd wife of Fred
Adores his old Love in his stead !
She *is* so nice, yet, I should say,
Not quite the thing for every day.
Wonders are wearying ! Felix goes
Next Sunday with her to the Close,
And you will judge.

Honorias asks
All Wiltshire Belles here ; Felix basks
Like Puss in fire-shine, when the room
Is thus aflame with female bloom.
But then she smiles when most would pout ;
And so his lawless loves go out
With the last brocade. 'Tis not the same,
I fear, with Mrs. Frederick Graham.
Honorias should not have her here,—
And this you might just hint, my Dear,—
For Felix says he never saw
Such proof of what he holds for law,
That 'beauty is love which can be seen.'
Whatever he by this may mean,
Were it not dreadful if he fell
In love with her on principle !

III

FROM JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM

Mother, I told you how, at first,
I fear'd this visit to the Hurst.
Fred must, I felt, be so distress'd
By aught in me unlike the rest
Who come here. But I find the place
Delightful ; there's such ease, and grace,
And kindness, and all seem to be
On such a high equality.
They have not got to think, you know,
How far to make the money go.
But Frederick says it's less the expense
Of money, than of sound good-sense,
Quickness to care what others feel,
And thoughts with nothing to conceal ;
Which I'll teach Johnny. Mrs. Vaughan
Was waiting for us on the Lawn,
And kiss'd and call'd me 'Cousin.' Fred
Neglected his old friends, she said.
He laugh'd, and colour'd up at this.
She was, you know, a flame of his ;
But I'm not jealous ! Luncheon done,
I left him, who had just begun
To talk about the Russian War
With an old Lady, Lady Carr,—

A Countess, but I'm more afraid,
A great deal, of the Lady's Maid,—
And went with Mrs. Vaughan to see
The pictures, which appear'd to be
Of sorts of horses, clowns, and cows
Call'd Wouvermans and Cuyps and Dows.
And then she took me up, to show
Her bedroom, where, long years ago,
A Queen slept. 'Tis all tapestries
Of Cupids, Gods, and Goddesses,
And black, carved oak. A curtain'd door
Leads thence into her soft Boudoir,
Where even her husband may but come
By favour. He, too, has his room,
Kept sacred to his solitude.
Did I not think the plan was good?
She ask'd me; but I said how small
Our house was, and that, after all,
Though Frederick would not say his prayers
At night till I was safe upstairs,
I thought it wrong to be so shy
Of being good when I was by.
'Oh, you should humour him!' she said,
With her sweet voice and smile; and led
The way to where the children ate
Their dinner, and Miss Williams sate.
She's only Nursery-Governess,
Yet they consider her no less
Than Lord or Lady Carr, or me.
Just think how happy she must be!
The Ball-Room, with its painted sky
Where heavy angels seem to fly,

Is a dull place ; its size and gloom
 Make them prefer, for drawing-room,
 The Library, all done up new
 And comfortable, with a view
 Of Salisbury Spire between the boughs.

When she had shown me through the house,
 (I wish I could have let her know
 That she herself was half the show ;
 She *is* so handsome and so kind !)
 She fetch'd the children, who had dined ;
 And, taking one in either hand,
 Show'd me how all the grounds were plann'd.
 The lovely garden gently slopes
 To where a curious bridge of ropes
 Crosses the Avon to the Park.
 We rested by the stream, to mark
 The brown backs of the hovering trout.
 Frank tickled one, and took it out
 From under a stone. We saw his owls,
 And awkward Cochinchina fowls,
 And shaggy pony in the croft ;
 And then he dragg'd us to a loft,
 Where pigeons, as he push'd the door,
 Fann'd clear a breadth of dusty floor,
 And set us coughing. I confess
 I trembled for my nice silk dress.
 I cannot think how Mrs. Vaughan
 Ventured with that which she had on—
 A mere white wrapper, with a few
 Plain trimmings of a quiet blue,
 But, oh, so pretty ! Then the bell
 For dinner rang. I look'd quite well

(‘Quite charming’ were the words Fred said,) With the new gown that I’ve had made.

I *am* so proud of Frederick.
He’s so high-bred and lordly-like
With Mrs. Vaughan ! He’s not quite so
At home with me ; but that, you know,
I can’t expect, or wish. ’Twould hurt,
And seem to mock at my desert.
Not but that I’m a duteous wife
To Fred ; but, in another life,
Where all are fair that have been true,
I hope I shall be graceful too,
Like Mrs. Vaughan. And, now, good-bye !
That happy thought has made me cry,
And feel half sorry that my cough,
In this fine air, is leaving off.

IV

FROM FREDERICK TO MRS. GRAHAM

Honoriam, trebly fair and mild
With added loves of lord and child,
Is else unalter'd. Years, which wrong
The rest, touch not her beauty, young
With youth which rather seems her clime,
Than aught that's relative to time.
How beyond hope was heard the prayer
I offer'd in my love's despair !
Could any, whilst there's any woe,
Be wholly blest, then she were so.
She is, and is aware of it,
Her husband's endless benefit ;
But, though their daily ways reveal
The depth of private joy they feel,
'Tis not their bearing each to each
That does abroad their secret preach,
But such a lovely good-intent
To all within their government
And friendship as, 'tis well discern'd,
Each of the other must have learn'd ;
For no mere dues of neighbourhood
Ever begot so blest a mood.

And fair, indeed, should be the few
God dowers with nothing else to do,

And liberal of their light, and free
To show themselves, that all may see !
For alms let poor men poorly give
The meat whereby men's bodies live ;
But they of wealth are stewards wise
Whose graces are their charities.

The sunny charm about this home
Makes all to shine who thither come.
My own dear Jane has caught its grace,
And, honour'd, honours too the place.
Across the lawn I lately walk'd
Alone, and watch'd where mov'd and talk'd,
Gentle and goddess-like of air,
Honorina and some Stranger fair.
I chose a path unblest by these ;
When one of the two Goddesses,
With my Wife's voice, but softer, said,
'Will you not walk with us, dear Fred?'

She moves, indeed, the modest peer
Of all the proudest ladies here.
Unawed she talks with men who stand
Among the leaders of the land,
And women beautiful and wise,
With England's greatness in their eyes.
To high, traditional good-sense,
And knowledge ripe without pretence,
And human truth exactly hit
By quiet and conclusive wit,
Listens my little, homely Dove,
Mistakes the points and laughs for love
And, after, stands and combs her hair,
And calls me much the wittiest there !

With reckless loyalty, dear Wife,
She lays herself about my life !
The joy I might have had of yore
I have not ; for 'tis now no more,
With me, the lyric time of youth,
And sweet sensation of the truth.
Yet, past my hope or purpose bless'd,
In my chance choice let be confess'd
The tenderer Providence that rules
The fates of children and of fools !

I kiss'd the kind, warm neck that slept,
And from her side this morning stepp'd,
To bathe my brain from drowsy night
In the sharp air and golden light.
The dew, like frost, was on the pane.
The year begins, though fair, to wane.
There is a fragrance in its breath
Which is not of the flowers, but death ;
And green above the ground appear
The lilies of another year.
I wander'd forth, and took my path
Among the bloomless aftermath ;
And heard the steadfast robin sing
As if his own warm heart were Spring,
And watch'd him feed where, on the yew,
Hung honey'd drops of crimson dew ;
And then return'd, by walls of peach,
And pear-trees bending to my reach,
And rose-beds with the roses gone,
To bright-laid breakfast. Mrs. Vaughan
Was there, none with her. I confess
I love her than of yore no less !

But she alone was loved of old ;
Now love is twain, nay, manifold ;
For, somehow, he whose daily life
Adjusts itself to one true wife,
Grows to a nuptial, near degree
With all that's fair and womanly.
Therefore, as more than friends, we met,
Without constraint, without regret ;
The wedded yoke that each had donn'd
Seeming a sanction, not a bond.

V

FROM MRS. GRAHAM

Your love lacks joy, your letter says.
 Yes ; love requires the focal space
 Of recollection or of hope,
 E'er it can measure its own scope.
 Too soon, too soon comes Death to show
 We love more deeply than we know !
 The rain, that fell upon the height
 Too gently to be call'd delight,
 Within the dark vale reappears
 As a wild cataract of tears ;
 And love in life should strive to see
 Sometimes what love in death would be !
 Easier to love, we so should find,
 It is than to be just and kind.

She's gone : shut close the coffin-lid :
 What distance for another did
 That death has done for her ! The good,
 Once gazed upon with heedless mood,
 Now fills with tears the famish'd eye,
 And turns all else to vanity.
 'Tis sad to see, with death between,
 The good we have pass'd and have not seen !
 How strange appear the words of all !
 The looks of those that live appal.

They are the ghosts, and check the breath :
There's no reality but death,
And hunger for some signal given
That we shall have our own in heaven.
But this the God of love lets be
A horrible uncertainty.

How great her smallest virtue seems,
How small her greatest fault ! Ill dreams
Were those that foil'd with loftier grace
The homely kindness of her face.
'Twas here she sat and work'd, and there
She comb'd and kiss'd the children's hair ;
Or, with one baby at her breast,
Another taught, or hush'd to rest.
Praise does the heart no more refuse
To the chief loveliness of use.
Her humblest good is hence most high
In the heavens of fond memory ;
And Love says Amen to the word,
A prudent wife is from the Lord.
Her worst gown's kept, ('tis now the best,
As that in which she oftenest dress'd,)
For memory's sake more precious grown
Than she herself was for her own.
Poor child ! foolish it seem'd to fly
To sobs instead of dignity,
When she was hurt. Now, more than all,
Heart-rending and angelical
That ignorance of what to do,
Bewilder'd still by wrong from you :
For what man ever yet had grace
Ne'er to abuse his power and place ?

No magic of her voice or smile
Suddenly raised a fairy isle,
But fondness for her underwent
An unregarded increment,
Like that which lifts, through centuries,
The coral-reef within the seas,
Till, lo ! the land where was the wave.
Alas ! 'tis everywhere her grave.

VI

FROM JANE TO MRS. GRAHAM

Dear Mother, I can surely tell,
Now, that I never shall get well.
Besides the warning in my mind,
All suddenly are grown so kind.
Fred stopp'd the Doctor, yesterday,
Downstairs, and, when he went away,
Came smiling back, and sat with me,
Pale, and conversing cheerfully
About the Spring, and how my cough,
In finer weather, would leave off.
I saw it all, and told him plain
I felt no hope of Spring again.
Then he, after a word of jest,
Burst into tears upon my breast,
And own'd, when he could speak, he **knew**
There was a little danger, too.
This made me very weak and ill,
And while, last night, I lay quite still,
And, as he fancied, in the deep,
Exhausted rest of my short sleep,
I heard, or dream'd I heard him pray :
' Oh, Father, take her not away !
' Let not life's dear assurance lapse
' Into death's agonised " Perhaps ",

' A hope without Thy promise, where
' Less than assurance is despair !
' Give me some sign, if go she must,
' That death's not worse than dust to dust,
' Not heaven, on whose oblivious shore
' Joy I may have, but her no more !
' The bitterest cross, it seems to me,
' Of all is infidelity ;
' And so, if I may choose, I'll miss
' The kind of heaven which comes to this.
' If doom'd, indeed, this fever ceased,
' To die out wholly, like a beast,
' Forgetting all life's ill success
' In dark and peaceful nothingness,
' I could but say, Thy will be done ;
' For, dying thus, I were but one
' Of seed innumerable which ne'er
' In all the worlds shall bloom or bear.
' I've put life past to so poor use
' Well may'st Thou life to come refuse ;
' And justice, which the spirit contents,
' Shall still in me all vain laments ;
' Nay, pleased, I will, while yet I live,
' Think Thou my forfeit joy may'st give
' To some fresh life, else unelect,
' And heaven not feel my poor defect !
' Only let not Thy method be
' To make that life, and call it me ;
' Still less to sever mine in twain,
' And tell each half to live again,
' And count itself the whole ! To die,
' Is it love's disintegrity ?

‘ Answer me “ No”, and I, with grace,
‘ Will life’s brief desolation face,
‘ My ways, as native to the clime,
‘ Adjusting to the wintry time,
‘ Ev’n with a patient cheer thereof—’

He started up, hearing me cough.
Oh, Mother, now my last doubt’s gone !
He likes me *more* than Mrs. Vaughan ;
And death, which takes me from his side,
Shows me, in very deed, his bride !

VII

FROM JANE TO FREDERICK

I leave this, Dear, for you to read,
For strength and hope, when I am dead.
When Grace died, I was so perplex'd,
I could not find one helpful text ;
And when, a little while before,
I saw her sobbing on the floor,
Because I told her that in heaven
She would be as the angels even,
And would not want her doll, 'tis true
A horrible fear within me grew,
That, since the preciousness of love
Went thus for nothing, mine might prove
To be no more, and heaven's bliss
Some dreadful good which is not this.

But being about to die makes clear
Many dark things. I have no fear,
Now, that my love, my grief, my joy
Is but a passion for a toy.
I cannot speak at all, I find,
The shining something in my mind
That shows so much that, if I took
My thoughts all down, 'twould make a book.
God's Word, which lately seem'd above
The simpleness of human love,

To my death-sharpen'd hearing tells
Of little or of nothing else ;
And many things I hoped were true,
When first they came, like songs, from you,
Now rise with witness past the reach
Of doubt, and I to you can teach,
As if with felt authority
And as things seen, what you taught me.

Yet how? I have no words but those
Which every one already knows :
As, 'No man hath at any time
'Seen God, but 'tis the love of Him
'Made perfect, and He dwells in us,
'If we each other love.' Or thus,
'My goodness misseth in extent
'Of Thee, Lord ! In the excellent
'I know Thee ; and the Saints on Earth
'Make all my love and holy mirth.'
And further, 'Inasmuch as ye
'Did it to one of these, to Me
'Ye did it, though ye nothing thought
'Nor knew of Me, in that ye wrought.'

What shall I dread? Will God undo
Our bond, which is all others too?
And when I meet you will you say
To my reclaiming looks, 'Away !
'A dearer love my bosom warms
'With higher rights and holier charms.
'The children, whom thou here may'st see,
'Neighbours that mingle thee and me,
'And gaily on impartial lyres
'Renounce the foolish filial fires

' They felt, with " Praise to God on high,
 " " Goodwill to all else equally " ;
 ' The trials, duties, service, tears ;
 ' The many fond, confiding years
 ' Of nearness sweet with thee apart ;
 ' The joy of body, mind, and heart ;
 ' The love that grew a reckless growth,
 ' Unmindful that the marriage-oath
 ' To love in an eternal style
 ' Meant—only for a little while ;
 ' Sever'd are now those bonds earth-wrought ;
 ' All love, not new, stands here for nought ! '

Why, it seems almost wicked, Dear,
 Even to utter such a fear !
 Are we not ' heirs ', as man and wife,
 ' Together of eternal life ' ?
 Was Paradise e'er meant to fade,
 To make which, marriage first was made ?
 Neither beneath him nor above
 Could man in Eden find his Love ;
 Yet with him in the garden walk'd
 His God, and with Him mildly talk'd !
 Shall the humble preference offend
 In heaven, which God did there commend ?
 Are ' honourable and undefiled '
 The names of aught from heaven exiled ?
 And are we not forbid to grieve
 As without hope ? Does God deceive,
 And call that hope which is despair,
 Namely, the heaven we should not share !
 Image and glory of the man,
 As he of God, is woman. Can

This holy, sweet proportion die
 Into a dull equality?
 Are we not one flesh, yea, so far
 More than the babe and mother are,
 That sons are bid mothers to leave
 And to their wives alone to cleave,
 'For *they* two are one flesh'? But 'tis
 In the flesh we rise. Our union is,
 You know 'tis said, 'great mystery.'
 Great mockery, it appears to me;
 Poor image of the spousal bond
 Of Christ and Church, if loosed beyond
 This life!—'Gainst which, and much more yet,
 There's not a single word to set.
 The speech to the scoffing Sadducee
 Is not in point to you and me;
 For how could Christ have taught such clods
 That Cæsar's things are also God's?
 The sort of Wife the Law could make
 Might well be 'hated' for Love's sake,
 And left, like money, land, or house;
 For out of Christ is no true spouse.

I used to think it strange of Him
 To make love's after-life so dim,
 Or only clear by inference:
 But God trusts much to common sense,
 And only tells us what, without
 His Word, we could not have found out.
 On fleshly tables of the heart
 He penn'd truth's feeling counterpart
 In hopes that come to all: so, Dear,
 Trust these, and be of happy cheer,

Nor think that he who has loved well
Is of all men most miserable.

There's much more yet I want to say,
But cannot now. You know my way
Of feeling strong from Twelve till Two
After my wine. I'll write to you
Daily some words, which you shall have
To break the silence of the grave.

VIII

FROM JANE TO FREDERICK

You think, perhaps, 'Ah, could she know
How much I loved her !' Dear, I do !
And you may say, 'Of this new awe
'Of heart which makes her fancies law,
'These watchful duties of despair,
'She does not dream, she cannot care !'
Frederick, you see how false that is,
Or how could I have written this ?
And, should it ever cross your mind
That, now and then, you were unkind,
You never, never were at all !
Remember that ! It's natural
For one like Mr. Vaughan to come,
From a morning's useful pastime, home,
And greet, with such a courteous zest,
His handsome wife, still newly dress'd,
As if the Bird of Paradise
Should daily change her plumage thrice.
He's always well, she's always gay.
Of course ! But he who toils all day,
And comes home hungry, tired, or cold,
And feels 'twould do him good to scold
His wife a little, let him trust
Her love, and say the things he must,

Till sooth'd in mind by meat and rest.
 If, after that, she's well caress'd,
 And told how good she is, to bear
 His humour, fortune makes it fair.
 Women like men to be like men ;
 That is, at least, just now and then.
 Thus, I have nothing to forgive,
 But those first years, (how could I live !)
 When, though I really did behave
 So stupidly, you never gave
 One unkind word or look at all :
 As if I was some animal
 You pitied ! Now, in later life
 You used me like a proper Wife.

You feel, Dear, in your present mood,
 Your Jane, since she was kind and good,
 A child of God, a living soul,
 Was not so different, on the whole,
 From Her who had a little more
 Of God's best gifts : but, oh, be sure,
 My dear, dear Love, to take no blame
 Because you could not feel the same
 Towards me, living, as when dead.
 A hungry man must needs think bread
 So sweet ! and, only at their rise
 And setting, blessings, to the eyes,
 Like the sun's course, grow visible.
 If you are sad, remember well,
 Against delusions of despair,
 That memory sees things as they were,
 And not as they were misenjoy'd,
 And would be still, if aught destroy'd

The glory of their hopelessness :
So that, in truth, you had me less
In days when necessary zeal
For my perfection made you feel
My faults the most, than now your love
Forgets but where it can approve.
You gain by loss, if that seem'd small
Possess'd, which, being gone, turns all
Surviving good to vanity.

Oh, Fred, this makes it sweet to die !

Say to yourself: ' 'Tis comfort yet
' I made her that which I regret ;
' And parting might have come to pass
' In a worse season ; as it was,
' Love an eternal temper took,
' Dipp'd, glowing, in Death's icy brook !'
Or say, ' On her poor feeble head
' This might have fallen : 'tis mine instead !
' And so great evil sets me free
' Henceforward from calamity.
' And, in her little children, too,

How much for her I yet can do !'
And grieve not for these orphans even ;
For central to the love of Heaven
Is each child as each star to space.
This truth my dying love has grace
To trust with a so sure content,
I fear I seem indifferent.

You must not think a child's small heart
Cold, because it and grief soon part.
Fanny will keep them all away,
Lest you should hear them laugh and play,

Before the funeral's over. Then
I hope you'll be yourself again,
And glad, with all your soul, to find
How God thus to the sharpest wind
Suits the shorn lambs. Instruct them, Dear,
For my sake, in His love and fear.
And show how, till their journey's done,
Not to be weary they must run.

Strive not to dissipate your grief
By any lightness. True relief
Of sorrow is by sorrow brought.
And yet for sorrow's sake, you ought
To grieve with measure. Do not spend
So good a power to no good end !
Would you, indeed, have memory stay
In the heart, lock up and put away
Relics and likenesses and all
Musings, which waste what they recall.
True comfort, and the only thing
To soothe without diminishing
A prized regret, is to match here,
By a strict life, God's love severe.
Yet, after all, by nature's course,
Feeling must lose its edge and force.
Again you'll reach the desert tracks
Where only sin or duty acts.
But, if love always lit our path,
Where were the trial of our faith ?

Oh, should the mournful honeymoon
Of death be over strangely soon,
And life-long resolutions, made
In grievous haste, as quickly fade,

Seeming the truth of grief to mock,
Think, Dearest, 'tis not by the clock
That sorrow goes ! A month of tears
Is more than many, many years
Of common time. Shun, if you can,
However, any passionate plan.
Grieve with the heart ; let not the head
Grieve on, when grief of heart is dead ;
For all the powers of life defy
A superstitious constancy.

The only bond I hold you to
Is that which nothing can undo.
A man is not a young man twice ;
And if, of his young years, he lies
A faithful score in one wife's breast,
She need not mind who has the rest.
In this do what you will, dear Love,
And feel quite sure that I approve.
And, should it chance as it may be,
Give her my wedding-ring from me ;
And never dream that you can err
T'wards me by being good to her ;
Nor let remorseful thoughts destroy
In you the kindly flowering joy
And pleasure of the natural life.

But don't forget your fond, dead Wife.
And, Frederick, should you ever be
Tempted to think your love of me
All fancy, since it drew its breath
So much more sweetly after death,
Remember that I never did
A single thing you once forbid ;

All poor folk liked me ; and, at the end,
Your Cousin call'd me 'Dearest Friend !'

And, now, 'twill calm your grief to know,—
You, who once loved Honoria so,—
There's kindness, that's look'd kindly on,
Between her Emily and John.
Thus, in your children, you will wed !
And John seems *so* much comforted
(Like Isaac when *his* mother died
And fair Rebekah was his bride)
By his new hope, for losing me !
So *all* is happiness, you see.
And that reminds me how, last night,
I dreamt of heaven, with great delight.
A strange, kind Lady watch'd my face,
Kiss'd me, and cried, 'His hope found grace !'
She bade me then, in the crystal floor,
Look at myself, myself no more ;
And bright within the mirror shone
Honoria's smile, and yet my own !
'And, when you talk, I hear,' she sigh'd,
'How much he loved her ! Many a bride
'In heaven such countersemblance wears
'Through what Love deem'd rejected prayers.'
She would have spoken still ; but, lo,
One of a glorious troop, aglow
From some great work, towards her came,
And she so laugh'd, 'twas such a flame,
Aaron's twelve jewels seem'd to mix
With the lights of the Seven Candlesticks.

IX

FROM LADY CLITHEROE TO MRS.
GRAHAM

My dearest Aunt, the Wedding-day,
But for Jane's loss, and you away,
Was all a Bride from heaven could beg !
Skies bluer than the sparrow's egg,
And clearer than the cuckoo's call !
And such a sun ! the flowers all
With double ardour seem'd to blow !
The very daisies were a show,
Expanded with uncommon pride,
Like little pictures of the Bride.

Your Great-Niece and your Grandson were
Perfection of a pretty pair.
How well Honoria's girls turn out,
Although they never go about !
Dear me, what trouble and expense
It took to teach mine confidence !
Hers greet mankind as I've heard say
That wild things do, where beasts of prey
Were never known, nor any men
Have met their fearless eyes till then.
Their grave, inquiring trust to find
All creatures of their simple kind

Quite disconcerts bold coxcombry,
And makes less perfect candour shy.
Ah, Mrs. Graham ! people may scoff,
But how your home-kept girls go off !
How Hymen hastens to unband
The waist that ne'er felt waltzer's hand !
At last I see my Sister's right,
And I've told Maud this very night,
(But, oh, my daughters have such wills !)
To knit, and only dance quadrilles.

You say Fred never writes to you
Frankly, as once he used to do,
About himself ; and you complain
He shared with none his grief for Jane.
It all comes of the foolish fright
Men feel at the word, hypocrite.
Although, when first in love, sometimes
They rave in letters, talk, and rhymes,
When once they find, as find they must,
How hard 'tis to be hourly just
To those they love, they are dumb for shame,
Where we, you see, talk on the same.

Honoria, to whose heart alone
He seems to open all his own,
At times has tears in her kind eyes,
After their private colloquies.
He's her most favour'd guest, and moves
My spleen by his impartial loves.
His pleasure has some inner spring
Depending not on anything.
Petting our Polly, none e'er smiled
More fondly on his favourite child ;

Yet, playing with his own, it is
Somehow as if it were not his.
He means to go again to sea,
Now that the wedding's over. He
Will leave to Emily and John
The little ones to practise on ;
And Major-domo, Mrs. Rouse,
A dear old soul from Wilton House,
Will scold the housemaids and the cook,
Till Emily has learn'd to look
A little braver than a lamb
Surprised by dogs without its dam !

Do, dear Aunt, use your influence,
And try to teach some plain good sense
To Mary. 'Tis not yet too late
To make her change her chosen state
Of single silliness. In truth,
I fancy that, with fading youth,
Her will now wavers. Yesterday,
Though, till the Bride was gone away,
Joy shone from Mary's loving heart,
I found her afterwards apart,
Hysterically sobbing. I
Knew much too well to ask her why.
This marrying of Nieces daunts
The bravest souls of maiden Aunts.
Though Sisters' children often blend
Sweetly the bonds of child and friend,
They are but reeds to rest upon.
When Emily comes back with John,
Her right to go downstairs before
Aunt Mary will but be the more

Observed if kindly waived, and how-
Shall these be as they were, when now
Niece has her John, and Aunt the sense
Of her superior innocence?

Somehow, all loves, however fond,
Prove lieges of the nuptial bond;
And she who dares at this to scoff,
Finds all the rest in time drop off;
While marriage, like a mushroom-ring,
Spreads its sure circle every Spring.

She twice refused George Vane, you know;
Yet, when he died three years ago
In the Indian war, she put on gray,
And wears no colours to this day.
And she it is who charges *me*
Dear Aunt, with 'inconsistency'!

X

FROM FREDERICK TO HONORIA

Cousin, my thoughts no longer try
To cast the fashion of the sky.
Imagination can extend
Scarcely in part to comprehend
The sweetness of our common food
Ambrosial, which ingratitude
And impious inadvertence waste,
Studious to eat but not to taste.
And who can tell what's yet in store
There, but that earthly things have more
Of all that makes their inmost bliss,
And life's an image still of this,
But haply such a glorious one
As is the rainbow of the sun?
Sweet are your words, but, after all
Their mere reversal may befall
The partners of His glories who
Daily is crucified anew :
Splendid privations, martyrdoms
To which no weak remission comes,
Perpetual passion for the good
Of them that feel no gratitude,
Far circlings, as of planets' fires,
Round never-to-be-reach'd desires,

Whatever rapturously sighs
That life is love, love sacrifice.
All I am sure of heaven is this :
Howe'er the mode, I shall not miss
One true delight which I have known.
Not on the changeful earth alone
Shall loyalty remain unmoved
T'wards everything I ever loved.
So Heaven's voice calls, like Rachel's voice
To Jacob in the field, ' Rejoice !
' Serve on some seven more sordid years,
' Too short for weariness or tears ;
' Serve on ; then, oh, Beloved, well tried,
' Take me for ever as thy Bride !'

XI

FROM MARY CHURCHILL TO THE DEAN

Charles does me honour, but 'twere vain
 To reconsider now again,
 And so to doubt the clear-shown truth
 I sought for, and received, when youth,
 Being fair, and woo'd by one whose love
 Was lovely, fail'd my mind to move.
 God bids them by their own will go,
 Who ask again the things they know †
 grieve for my infirmity,
 And ignorance of how to be
 Faithful, at once, to the heavenly life,
 And the fond duties of a wife.
 Narrow am I and want the art
 To love two things with all my heart.
 Occupied singly in His search,
 Who, in the Mysteries of the Church,
 Returns, and calls them Clouds of Heaven,
 I tread a road, straight, hard, and even ;
 But fear to wander all confused,
 By two-fold fealty abused.
 Either should I the one forget,
 Or scantily pay the other's debt.

You bid me, Father, count the cost.
I have ; and all that must be lost
I feel as only woman can.
To make the heart's wealth of some man,
And through the untender world to move,
Wrapt safe in his superior love,
How sweet ! How sweet the household round
Of duties, and their narrow bound,
So plain, that to transgress were hard,
Yet full of manifest reward !
The charities not marr'd, like mine,
With chance of thwarting laws divine ;
The world's regards and just delight
In one that's clearly, kindly right,
How sweet ! Dear Father, I endure,
Not without sharp regret, be sure,
To give up such glad certainty,
For what, perhaps, may never be.
For nothing of my state I know,
But that t'ward heaven I seem to go,
As one who fondly landward hies
Along a deck that seaward flies.
With every year, meantime, some grace
Of earthly happiness gives place
To humbling ills, the very charms
Of youth being counted, henceforth, harms :
To blush already seems absurd ;
Nor know I whether I should herd
With girls or wives, or sadlier balk
Maids' merriment or matrons' talk.

But strait's the gate of life ! O'er late,
Besides, 'twere now to change my fate :

For flowers and fruit of love to form,
It must be Spring as well as warm.
The world's delight my soul dejects,
Revening all my disrespects
Of old, with incapacity
To chime with even its harmless glee,
Which sounds, from fields beyond my range,
Like fairies' music, thin and strange.
With something like remorse, I grant
The world has beauty which I want ;
And if, instead of judging it,
I at its Council chance to sit,
Or at its gay and order'd Feast,
My place seems lower than the least.
The conscience of the life to be
Smites me with inefficiency,
And makes me all unfit to bless
With comfortable earthliness
The rest-desiring brain of man.
Finally, then, I fix my plan
To dwell with Him that dwells apart
In the highest heaven and lowliest heart ;
Nor will I, to my utter loss,
Look to pluck roses from the Cross.
As for the good of human love,
'Twere countercheck almost enough
To think that one must die before
The other ; and perhaps 'tis more
In love's last interest to do
Nought the least contrary thereto,
Than to be blest, and be unjust,
Or suffer injustice ; as they must,

Without a miracle, whose pact
Compels to mutual life and act,
Whether love shines, or darkness sleeps
Cold on the spirit's changeful deeps.

Enough if, to my earthly share,
Fall gleams that keep me from despair.
Happy the things we here discern ;
More happy those for which we yearn ;
But measurelessly happy above
All else are those we guess not of !

XII

FROM FELIX TO HONORIA

Dearest, my Love and Wife, 'tis long
Ago I closed the unfinish'd song
Which never could be finish'd ; nor
Will ever Poet utter more
Of love than I did, watching well
To lure to speech the unspeakable !
' *Why, having won her, do I woo ?* '
That final strain to the last height flew
Of written joy, which wants the smile
And voice that are, indeed, the while
They last, the very things you speak,
Honorïa, who mak'st music weak
With ways that say, ' Shall I not be
' As kind to all as Heaven to me ? '
And yet, ah, twenty-fold my Bride !
Rising, this twentieth festal-tide,
You still soft sleeping, on this day
Of days, some words I long to say,
Some words superfluously sweet
Of fresh assurance, thus to greet
Your waking eyes, which never grow
Weary of telling what I know
So well, yet only well enough
To wish for further news thereof.

Here, in this early autumn dawn,
By windows opening on the lawn,

Where sunshine seems asleep, though bright,
And shadows yet are sharp with night,
And, further on, the wealthy wheat
Bends in a golden drowse, how sweet
To sit and cast my careless looks
Around my walls of well-read books,
Wherein is all that stands redeem'd
From time's huge wreck, all men have dream'd
Of truth, and all by poets known
Of feeling, and in weak sort shown,
And, turning to my heart again,
To find I have what makes them vain,
The thanksgiving mind, which wisdom sums,
And you, whereby it freshly comes
As on that morning (can there be
Twenty-two years 'twixt it and me?)
When, thrill'd with hopeful love I rose
And came in haste to Sarum Close,
Past many a homestead slumbering white
In lonely and pathetic light,
Merely to fancy which drawn blind
Of thirteen had my Love behind,
And in her sacred neighbourhood
To feel that sweet scorn of all good
But her, which let the wise forfend
When wisdom learns to comprehend !

Dearest, as each returning May
I see the season new and gay
With new joy and astonishment,
And Nature's infinite ostent
Of lovely flowers in wood and mead,
That weet not whether any heed,

So see I, daily wondering, you,
And worship with a passion new
The Heaven that visibly allows
Its grace to go about my house,
The partial Heaven, that, though I err
And mortal am, gave all to her
Who gave herself to me. Yet I
Boldly thank Heaven (and so defy
The beggarly soul'd humbleness
Which fears God's bounty to confess,)
That I was fashion'd with a mind
Seeming for this great gift design'd,
So naturally it moved above
All sordid contraries of love,
Strengthen'd in youth with discipline
Of light, to follow the divine
Vision, (which ever to the dark
Is such a plague as was the ark
In Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron,) still
Discerning with the docile will
Which comes of full persuaded thought,
That intimacy in love is nought
Without pure reverence, whereas this,
In tearfullest banishment, is bliss.

And so, dearest Honoria, I
Have never learn'd the weary sigh
Of those that to their love-feasts went,
Fed, and forgot the Sacrament ;
And not a trifle now occurs
But sweet initiation stirs
Of new-discover'd joy, and lends
To feeling change that never ends ;

And duties, which the many irk,
Are made all wages and no work.

How sing of such things save to her,
Love's self, so love's interpreter?
How the supreme rewards confess
Which crown the austere voluptuousness
Of heart, that earns, in midst of wealth,
The appetite of want and health,
Relinquishes the pomp of life
And beauty to the pleasant Wife
At home, and does all joy despise
As out of place but in her eyes?
How praise the years and gravity
That make each favour seem to be
A lovelier weakness for her lord?
And, ah, how find the tender word
To tell aright of love that glows
The fairer for the fading rose?
Of frailty which can weight the arm
To lean with thrice its girlish charm?
Of grace which, like this autumn day,
Is not the sad one of decay,
Yet one whose pale brow pondereth
The far-off majesty of death?
How tell the crowd, whom passion rends,
That love grows mild as it ascends?
That joy's most high and distant mood
Is lost, not found in dancing blood;
Albeit kind acts and smiling eyes,
And all those fond realities
Which are love's words, in us mean more
Delight than twenty years before

How, Dearest, finish, without wrong
To the speechless heart, the unfinish'd song,
Its high, eventful passages
Consisting, say, of things like these :—

One morning, contrary to law,
Which, for the most, we held in awe,
Commanding either not to intrude
On the other's place of solitude
Or solitary mind, for fear
Of coming there when God was near,
And finding so what should be known
To him who is merciful alone,
And views the working ferment base
Of waking flesh and sleeping grace,
Not as we view, our kindness check'd
By likeness of our own defect,
I, venturing to her room, because
(Mark the excuse !) my Birthday 'twas,
Saw, here across a careless chair,
A ball-dress flung, as light as air,
And, here, beside a silken couch,
Pillows which did the pressure vouch
Of pious knees, (sweet piety !
Of goodness made and charity,
If gay looks told the heart's glad sense,
Much rather than of penitence,)
And, on the couch, an open book,
And written list—I did not look,
Yet just in her clear writing caught :—
' Habitual faults of life and thought
' Which most I need deliverance from.'
I turn'd aside, and saw her come

Adown the filbert-shaded way,
Beautified with her usual gay
Hypocrisy of perfectness,
Which made her heart, and mine no less,
So happy ! And she cried to me,
' You lose by breaking rules, you see !
' Your Birthday treat is now half-gone
' Of seeing my new ball-dress on.'
And, meeting so my lovely Wife,
A passing pang, to think that life
Was mortal, when I saw her laugh,
Shaped in my mind this epitaph :
' Faults had she, child of Adam's stem,
' But only Heaven knew of them.'

Or thus :

For many a dreadful day,
In sea-side lodgings sick she lay,
Noteless of love, nor seem'd to hear
The sea, on one side, thundering near,
Nor, on the other, the loud Ball
Held nightly in the public hall ;
Nor vex'd they my short slumbers, though
I woke up if she breathed too low.
Thus, for three months, with terrors rife,
The pending of her precious life
I watch'd o'er ; and the danger, at last,
The kind Physician said, was past.
Howbeit, for seven harsh weeks the East
Breathed witheringly, and Spring's growth ceased,
And so she only did not die ;
Until the bright and blighting sky

Changed into cloud, and the sick flowers
Remember'd their perfumes, and showers
Of warm, small rain refreshing flew
Before the South, and the Park grew,
In three nights, thick with green. Then she
Revived, no less than flower and tree,
In the mild air, and, the fourth day,
Look'd supernaturally gay
With large, thanksgiving eyes that shone,
The while I tied her bonnet on,
So that I led her to the glass,
And bade her see how fair she was,
And how love visibly could shine.
Profuse of hers, desiring mine,
And mindful I had loved her most
When beauty seem'd a vanish'd boast,
She laugh'd. I press'd her then to me,
Nothing but soft humility ;
Nor e'er enhanced she with such charms
Her acquiescence in my arms.
And, by her sweet love-weakness made
Courageous, powerful, and glad,
In a clear illustration high
Of heavenly affection, I
Perceived that utter love is all
The same as to be rational,
And that the mind and heart of love,
Which think they cannot do enough,
Are truly the everlasting doors
Wherethrough, all unpetition'd, pours
The eternal pleasance. Wherefore we
Had innermost tranquillity,

And breathed one life with such a sense
Of friendship and of confidence,
That, recollecting the sure word :
' If two of you are in accord,
' On earth, as touching any boon
' Which ye shall ask, it shall be done
' In heaven ', we ask'd that heaven's bliss
Might ne'er be any less than this ;
And, for that hour, we seem'd to have
The secret of the joy we gave.

How sing of such things, save to her,
Love's self, so love's interpreter ?
How read from such a homely page
In the ear of this unhomely age ?
' Tis now as when the Prophet cried :
' The nation hast Thou multiplied,
' But Thou hast not increased the joy !'
And yet, ere wrath or rot destroy
Of England's state the ruin fair,
Oh, might I so its charm declare,
That, in new Lands, in far-off years,
Delighted he should cry that hears :
' Great is the Land that somewhat best
' Works, to the wonder of the rest !
' We, in our day, have better done
' This thing or that than any one ;
' And who but, still admiring, sees
' How excellent for images
' Was Greece, for laws how wise was Rome ;
' But read this Poet, and say if home
' And private love did e'er so smile
' As in that ancient English isle !'

XIII

FROM LADY CLITHEROE TO EMILY GRAHAM

My dearest Niece, I'm charmed to hear
The scenery's fine at Windermere,
And glad a six-weeks' wife defers
In the least to wisdom not yet hers.
But, Child, I've no advice to give !
Rules only make it hard to live.
And where's the good of having been
Well taught from seven to seventeen,
If, married, you may not leave off,
And say, at last, ' I'm good enough !'
Weeding out folly, still leave some.
It gives both lightness and *aplomb*.
We know, however wise by rule,
Woman is still by nature fool ;
And men have sense to like her all
The more when she is natural.
'Tis true that, if we choose, we can
Mock to a miracle the man ;
But iron in the fire red hot,
Though 'tis the heat, the fire 'tis not :
And who, for such a feint, would pledge
The babe's and woman's privilege,

No duties and a thousand rights?
Besides, defect love's flow incites,
As water in a well will run
Only the while 'tis drawn upon.

‘Point de culte sans mystère’, you say,
‘And what if that should die away?’
Child, never fear that either could
Pull from Saint Cupid's face the hood.
The follies natural to each
Surpass the other's moral reach.
Just think how men, with sword and gun,
Will really fight, and never run ;
And all in sport : they would have died,
For sixpence more, on the other side !
A woman's heart must ever warm
At such odd ways : and so we charm
By strangeness which, the more they mark,
The more men get into the dark.
The marvel, by familiar life,
Grows, and attaches to the wife
By whom it grows. Thus, silly Girl,
To John you'll always be the pearl
In the oyster of the universe ;
And, though in time he'll treat you worse,
He'll love you more, you need not doubt,
And never, never find you out !

My Dear, I know that dreadful thought
That you've been kinder than you ought.
It almost makes you hate him ! Yet
'Tis wonderful how men forget,
And how a merciful Providence
Deprives our husbands of all sense

Of kindness past, and makes them deem
We always were what now we seem.
For their own good we must, you know,
However plain the way we go,
Still make it strange with stratagem ;
And instinct tells us that, to them,
'Tis always right to bate their price.
Yet I must say they're rather nice,
And, oh, so easily taken in
To cheat them almost seems a sin !
And, Dearest, 'twould be most unfair
To John your feelings to compare
With his, or any man's ; for she
Who loves at all loves always ; he,
Who loves far more, loves yet by fits,
And, when the wayward wind remits
To blow, his feelings faint and drop
Like forge-flames when the bellows stop.
Such things don't trouble you at all
When once you know they're natural.

My love to John ; and, pray, my Dear,
Don't let me see you for a year ;
Unless, indeed, ere then you've learn'd
That Beauties wed are blossoms turn'd
To unripe codlings, meant to dwell
In modest shadow hidden well,
Till this green stage again permute
To glow of flowers with good of fruit.
I will not have my patience tried
By your absurd new-married pride,
That scorns the world's slow-gather'd sense,
Ties up the hands of Providence,

Rules babes, before there's hope of one,
Better than mothers e'er have done,
And, for your poor particular,
Neglects delights and graces far
Beyond your crude and thin conceit.
Age has romance almost as sweet
And much more generous than this
Of yours and John's. With all the bliss
Of the evenings when you coo'd with him,
And upset home for your sole whim,
You might have envied, were you wise,
The tears within your Mother's eyes,
Which, I dare say, you did not see.
But let that pass ! Yours yet will be,
 hope, as happy, kind, and true
As lives which now seem void to you.
Have you not seen shop-painters paste
Their gold in sheets, then rub to waste
Full half, and, lo, you read the name ?
Well, Time, my Dear, does much the same
With this unmeaning glare of love.

But, though you yet may much improve,
In marriage, be it still confess'd,
There's little merit at the best.
Some half-a-dozen lives, indeed,
Which else would not have had the need,
Get food and nurture, as the price
Of antedated Paradise ;
But what's that to the varied want
Succour'd by Mary, your dear Aunt,
Who put the bridal crown thrice by,
For that of which virginity,

So used, has hope? She sends her love,
As usual with a proof thereof—
Papa's discourse, which you, no doubt,
Heard none of, neatly copied out
Whilst we were dancing. All are well,
Adieu, for there's the Luncheon Bell.

THE WEDDING SERMON

I

The truths of Love are like the sea
For clearness and for mystery.
Of that sweet love which, startling, wakes
Maiden and Youth, and mostly breaks
The word of promise to the ear,
But keeps it, after many a year,
To the full spirit, how shall I speak ?
My memory with age is weak,
And I for hopes do oft suspect
The things I seem to recollect.
Yet who but must remember well
'Twas this made heaven intelligible
As motive, though 'twas small the power
The heart might have, for even an hour,
To hold possession of the height
Of nameless pathos and delight !

2

In Godhead rise, thither flow back
All loves, which, as they keep or lack,
In their return, the course assign'd,
Are virtue or sin. Love's every kind,
Lofty or low, of spirit or sense,
Desire is, or benevolence.

He who is fairer, better, higher
Than all His works, claims all desire,
And in His Poor, His Proxies, asks
Our whole benevolence : He tasks,
Howbeit, His People by their powers ;
And if, my Children, you, for hours,
Daily, untortur'd in the heart,
Can worship, and time's other part
Give, without rough recoils of sense,
To the claims ingrate of indigence,
Happy are you, and fit to be
Wrought to rare heights of sanctity,
For the humble to grow humbler at.
But if the flying spirit falls flat,
After the modest spell of prayer
That saves the day from sin and care,
And the upward eye a void describes,
And praises are hypocrisies,
And, in the soul, o'erstrain'd for grace,
A godless anguish grows apace ;
Or, if impartial charity
Seems, in the act, a sordid lie,
Do not infer you cannot please
God, or that He his promises
Postpones, but be content to love
No more than He accounts enough.
Account them poor enough who want
Any good thing which you can grant ;
And fathom well the depths of life
In loves of Husband and of Wife,
Child, Mother, Father ; simple keys
To what cold faith calls mysteries.

3

The love of marriage claims, above
All other kinds, the name of love,
As perfectest, though not so high
As love which Heaven with single eye
Considers. Equal and entire,
Therein benevolence, desire,
Elsewhere ill-join'd or found apart,
Become the pulses of one heart,
Which now contracts, and now dilates,
And, both to the height exalting, mates
Self-seeking to self-sacrifice.
Nay, in its subtle paradise
(When purest) this one love unites
All modes of these two opposites,
All balanced in accord so rich
Who may determine which is which ?
Chiefly God's Love does in it live,
And nowhere else so sensitive ;
For each is all that the other's eye,
In the vague vast of Deity,
Can comprehend and so contain
As still to touch and ne'er to strain
The fragile nerves of joy. And then
'Tis such a wise goodwill to men
And politic economy
As in a prosperous State we see,
Where every plot of common land
Is yielded to some private hand
To fence about and cultivate.
Does narrowness its praise abate ?

Nay, the infinite of man is found
But in the beating of its bound,
And, if a brook its banks o'erpass,
'Tis not a sea, but a morass.

4

No giddiest hope, no wildest guess
Of Love's most innocent loftiness
Had dared to dream of its own worth,
Till Heaven's bold sun-gleam lit the earth.
Christ's marriage with the Church is more,
My Children, than a metaphor.
The heaven of heavens is symbol'd where
The torch of Psyche flash'd despair.

But here I speak of heights, and heights
Are hardly scaled. The best delights
Of even this homeliest passion, are
In the most perfect souls so rare,
That they who feel them are as men
Sailing the Southern ocean, when,
At midnight, they look up, and eye
The starry Cross, and a strange sky
Of brighter stars ; and sad thoughts come
To each how far he is from home.

5

Love's inmost nuptial sweetness see
In the doctrine of virginity !
Could lovers, at their dear wish, blend,
'Twould kill the bliss which they intend ;
For joy is love's obedience
Against the law of natural sense ;

And those perpetual yearnings sweet
Of lives which dream that they can meet
Are given that lovers never may
Be without sacrifice to lay
On the high altar of true love,
With tears of vestal joy. To move
Frantic, like comets to our bliss,
Forgetting that we always miss,
And so to seek and fly the sun,
By turns, around which love should run,
Perverts the ineffable delight
Of service guerdon'd with full sight
And pathos of a hopeless want,
To an unreal victory's vaunt,
And plaint of an unreal defeat.
Yet no less dangerous misconceit
May also be of the virgin will,
Whose goal is nuptial blessing still,
And whose true being doth subsist,
There where the outward forms are miss'd,
In those who learn and keep the sense
Divine of 'due benevolence',
Seeking for aye, without alloy
Of selfish thought, another's joy,
And finding in degrees unknown
That which in act they shunn'd, their own.
For all delights of earthly love
Are shadows of the heavens, and move
As other shadows do ; they flee
From him that follows them ; and he
Who flies, for ever finds his feet
Embraced by their pursuings sweet.

6

Then, even in love humane, do I
Not counsel aspirations high,
So much as sweet and regular
Use of the good in which we are.
As when a man along the ways
Walks, and a sudden music plays,
His step unchanged, he steps in time,
So let your Grace with Nature chime.
Her primal forces burst, like straws,
The bonds of uncongenial laws. .
Right life is glad as well as just,
And, rooted strong in 'This I must',
It bears aloft the blossom gay
And zephyr-toss'd, of 'This I may';
Whereby the complex heavens rejoice
In fruits of uncommanded choice.
Be this your rule : seeking delight,
Esteem success the test of right ;
For 'gainst God's will much may be done,
But nought enjoy'd and pleasures none
Exist, but, like to springs of steel,
Active no longer than they feel
The checks that make them serve the soul,
They take their vigour from control.
A man need only keep but well
The Church's indispensable
First precepts, and she then allows,
Nay, more, she bids him, for his spouse,
Leave even his heavenly Father's awe,
At times, and His immaculate law,

Construed in its extremer sense.
Jehovah's mild magnipotence
Smiles to behold His children play
In their own free childish way,
And can His fullest praise descry
In the exuberant liberty
Of those who, having understood
The glory of the Central Good,
And how souls ne'er may match or merge,
But as they thitherward converge,
Take in love's innocent gladness part
With infantine, untroubled heart,
And faith that, straight t'wards heaven's far Spring,
Sleeps, like the swallow, on the wing.

7

Lovers, once married, deem their bond
Then perfect, scanning nought beyond
For love to do but to sustain
The spousal hour's delighted gam.
But time and a right life alone
Fulfil the promise then foreshown.
The Bridegroom and the Bride withal
Are but unwrought material
Of marriage ; nay, so far is love,
Thus crown'd, from being thereto enough,
Without the long, compulsive awe
Of duty, that the bond of law
Does oftener marriage-love evoke,
Than love, which does not wear the yoke

Of legal vows, submits to be
Self-rein'd from ruinous liberty.
Lovely is love ; but age well knows
'Twas law which kept the lover's vows
Inviolatè through the year or years
Of worship pieced with panic fears,
When she who lay within his breast
Seem'd of all women perhaps the best,
But not the whole, of womankind,
Or love, in his yet wayward mind,
Had ghastly doubts its precious life
Was pledged for aye to the wrong wife.

Could it be else ? A youth pursues
A maid, whom chance, not he, did choose,
Till to his strange arms hurries she
In a despair of modesty.
Then, simply and without pretence
Of insight or experience,
They plight their vows. The parents say
'We cannot speak them yea or nay ;
'The thing proceedeth from the Lord !'
And wisdom still approves their word ;
For God created so these two
They match as well as others do
That take more pains, and trust Him less
Who never fails, if ask'd, to bless
His children's helpless ignorance
And blind election of life's chance.
Verily, choice not matters much,
If but the woman's truly such,
And the young man has led the life
Without which how shall e'er the wife

Be the one woman in the world?
Love's sensitive tendrils sicken, curl'd
Round folly's former stay; for 'tis
The doom of all unsanction'd bliss
To mock some good that, gain'd, keeps still
The taint of the rejected ill.

8

Howbeit, though both were perfect, she
Of whom the maid was prophecy
As yet lives not, and Love rebels
Against the law of any else;
And, as a steed takes blind alarm,
Disowns the rein, and hunts his harm,
So, misdespairing word and act
May now perturb the happiest pact.

The more, indeed, is love, the more
Peril to love is now in store.
Against it nothing can be done
But only this: leave ill alone!
Who tries to mend his wife succeeds
As he who knows not what he needs.
He much affronts a worth as high
As his, and that equality
Of spirits in which abide the grace
And joy of her subjected place;
And does the still growth check and blurr
Of contraries, confusing her
Who better knows what he desires
Than he, and to that mark aspires

With perfect zeal, and a deep wit
Which nothing helps but trusting it.

So, loyally o'erlooking all
In which love's promise short may fall
Of full performance, honour that
As won, which aye love worketh at !
It is but as the pedigree
Of perfectness which is to be
That our best good can honour claim ;
Yet honour to deny were shame
And robbery ; for it is the mould
Wherein to beauty runs the gold
Of good intention, and the prop
That lifts to the sun the earth-drawn crop
Of human sensibilities.

Such honour, with a conduct wise
In common things, as, not to steep
The lofty mind of love in sleep
Of over much familiarity ;
Not to degrade its kind caress,
As those do that can feel no more,
So give themselves to pleasures o'er ;
Not to let morning-sloth destroy
The evening-flower, domestic joy ;
Not by uxoriousness to chill
The warm devotion of her will
Who can but half her love confer
On him that cares for nought but her ;—
These, and like obvious prudences
Observed, he's safest that relies,
For the hope she will not always seem,
Caught, but a laurel or a stream,

On time ; on her unsearchable
Love-wisdom ; on their work done well,
Discreet with mutual aid ; on might
Of shared affliction and delight ;
On pleasures that so childish be
They're 'shamed to let the children see,
By which life keeps the valleys low
Where love does naturally grow ;
On much whereof hearts have account,
Though heads forget ; on babes, chief fount
Of union, and for which babes are
No less than this for them, nay far
More, for the bond of man and wife
To the very verge of future life
Strengthens, and yearns for brighter day,
While others, with their use, decay ;
And, though true marriage purpose keeps
Of offspring, as the centre sleeps
Within the wheel, transmitting thence
Fury to the circumference,
Love's self the noblest offspring is,
And sanction of the nuptial kiss ;
Lastly, on either's primal curse,
Which help and sympathy reverse
To blessings.

9

God, who may be well
Jealous of His chief miracle,
Bids sleep the meddling soul of man,
Through the long process of this plan,

Whereby, from his unweeting side,
The Wife's created, and the Bride,
That chance one of her strange, sweet sex
He to his glad life did annex,
Grows more and more, by day and night,
The one in the whole world opposite
Of him, and in her nature all
So suited and reciprocal
To his especial form of sense,
Affection, and intelligence,
That, whereas love at first had strange
Relapses into lust of change,
It now finds (wondrous this, but true !)
The long-accustom'd only new,
And the untried common ; and, whereas
An equal seeming danger was
Of likeness lacking joy and force,
Or difference reaching to divorce,
Now can the finish'd lover see
Marvel of me most far from me,
Whom without pride he may admire
Without Narcissus' doom desire
Serve without selfishness, and love
'Even as himself' in sense above
Niggard 'as much', yea, as she is
The only part of him that's his.

IO

I do not say love's youth returns ;
That joy which so divinely yearns !
But just esteem of present good
Shows all regret such gratitude

As if the sparrow in her nest,
Her woolly young beneath her breast,
Should these despise, and sorrow for
Her five blue eggs that are no more.
Nor say I the fruit has quite the scope
Of the flower's spiritual hope.
Love's best is service, and of this,
Howe'er devout, use dulls the bliss.
Though love is all of earth that's dear,
Its home, my Children, is not here :
The pathos of eternity
Does in its fullest pleasure sigh.

Be grateful and most glad thereof.
Parting, as 'tis, is pain enough.
If love, by joy, has learn'd to give
Praise with the nature sensitive,
At last, to God, we then possess
The end of mortal happiness,
And henceforth very well may wait
The unbarring of the golden gate,
Wherethrough, already, faith can see
That apter to each wish than we
Is God, and curious to bless
Better than we devise or guess ;
Not without condescending craft
To disappoint with bliss, and waft
Our vessels frail, when worst He mocks
The heart with breakers and with rocks,
To happiest havens. You have heard
Your bond death-sentenced by His Word.
What, if, in heaven, the name be o'er,
Because the thing is so much more ?

All are, 'tis writ, as angels there,
Nor male nor female. Each a stair
In the hierarchical ascent
Of active and recipient
Affections, what if all are both
By turn, as they themselves betroth
To adoring what is next above,
Or serving what's below their love?

Of this we are certified, that we
Are shaped here for eternity,
So that a careless word will make
Its dint upon the form we take
For ever. If, then, years have wrought
Two strangers to become, in thought,
Will, and affection, but one man
For likeness, as none others can,
Without like process, shall this tree,
The king of all the forest, be,
Alas, the only one of all
That shall not lie where it doth fall?
Shall this unflagging flame, here nurs'd
By everything, yea, when reversed,
Blazing, in fury, brighter, wink,
Flicker, and into darkness shrink,
When all else glows, baleful or brave,
In the keen air beyond the grave?

Beware; for fiends in triumph laugh
O'er him who learns the truth by half!
Beware; for God will not endure
For men to make their hope more pure
Than His good promise, or require
Another than the five-string'd lyre

Which he has vow'd again to the hands
Devout of him who understands
To tune it justly here ! Beware
The Powers of Darkness and the Air,
Which lure to empty heights man's hope,
Bepraising heaven's ethereal cope,
But covering with their cloudy cant
Its ground of solid adamant,
That strengthens ether for the flight
Of angels, makes and measures height,
And in materiality
Exceeds our Earth's in such degree
As all else Earth exceeds ! Do I
Here utter aught too dark or high ?
Have you not seen a bird's beak slay
Proud Psyche, on a summer's day ?
Down fluttering drop the frail wings four,
Missing the weight which made them soar.
Spirit is heavy nature's wing,
And is not rightly anything
Without its burden, whereas this,
Wingless, at least a maggot is,
And, wing'd, is honour and delight
Increasing endlessly with height.

II

If unto any here that chance
Fell not, which makes a month's romance,
Remember, few wed whom they would.
And this, like all God's laws, is good ;

For nought's so sad, the whole world o'er,
As much love which has once been more.
Glorious for light is the earliest love ;
But worldly things, in the rays thereof,
Extend their shadows, every one
False as the image which the sun
At noon or eve dwarfs or protracts.
A perilous lamp to light men's acts !
By Heaven's kind, impartial plan,
Well-wived is he that's truly man
If but the woman's womanly,
As such a man's is sure to be.
Joy of all eyes and pride of life
Perhaps she is not ; the likelier wife !
If it be thus ; if you have known,
(As who has not ?) some heavenly one,
Whom the dull background of despair
Help'd to show forth supremely fair ;
If memory, still remorseful, shapes
Young Passion bringing Eshcol grapes
To travellers in the Wilderness,
This truth will make regret the less :
Mighty in love as graces are,
God's ordinance is mightier far ;
And he who is but just and kind
And patient, shall for guerdon find,
Before long, that the body's bond
Is all else utterly beyond
In power of love to actualise
The soul's bond which it signifies
And even to deck a wife with grace
External in the form and face.

A five years' wife, and not yet fair?
Blame let the man, not Nature, bear!
For, as the sun, warming a bank
Where last year's grass droops gray and dank,
Evokes the violet, bids disclose
In yellow crowds the fresh primrose,
And foxglove hang her flushing head,
So vernal love, where all seems dead,
Makes beauty abound.

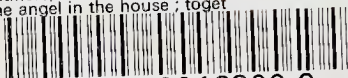
Then was that nought,
That trance of joy beyond all thought,
The vision, in one, of womanhood?
Nay, for all women holding good,
Should marriage such a prologue want,
'Twere sordid and most ignorant
Profanity; but, having this,
'Tis honour now, and future bliss;
For where is he that, knowing the height
And depth of ascertain'd delight,
Inhumanly henceforward lies
Content with mediocrities!

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